

RIGHT-SIZING INTERVENTION
THE PHILIPPINES, EL SALVADOR, AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN
FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE

BY
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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards or research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

Popular interpretations of recent defense strategic guidance suggest that America is turning away from messy interventions in foreign irregular wars and toward great-power conflict with China. Actual guidance, however, urges something much different: the acknowledgement that *both* irregular threats and a rising China are relevant to American national security. The current global security environment coupled with looming fiscal austerity demand that strategists think seriously about affordable and effective ways to deal with a wide spectrum of threats. Numerous irregular warfare practitioners and scholars have offered a method for engaging irregular threats as an alternative to expensive large-scale counterinsurgency. That alternative is small-scale foreign internal defense (FID).

Civilian and military leadership have been pleased with the progress demonstrated in Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P) and US assistance to the Colombian military. These two FID missions have been executed with a tiny number of American personnel at a fraction of the budgets required for counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq. By one estimate, the annual budget for OEF-P was expended once every three hours in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The missions in the Philippines and Colombia are not the only examples of small-scale FID. Advocates point to successes in Greece, the Republic of Georgia, and a number of other locations. Two historic examples are cited most frequently: the Anti-Hukbalahap Campaign in the Philippines (1946-1956) and El Salvador's Civil War (1980-1992).

The author analyzes the two frequently-cited but little-understood FID missions in the Philippines and El Salvador to expose both the truths and myths surrounding each operation. The analysis is based on a framework defined by American interests, partner-nation compatibility, and sound advising fundamentals. The assessment provided by this framework identifies the unique conditions defining each conflict to demonstrate when small-scale FID may, or may not, be an appropriate course of action in future contingencies. The author concludes that these missions had contextually unique qualities and that the study of small-scale FID is best served by acknowledging differences between individual cases, and the conditions influencing to success or failure.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Irregular war is in fact as old as the hills which offer its best terrain; older, clearly, than 'regular' war which has grown out of it, as the city has grown out of the village.

—W.E.D. Allen
Guerrilla War in Abyssinia

These problems are very long standing, yet manifestly far from being understood—especially in those countries where everything that can be called 'guerrilla warfare' has become a new military fashion or craze.

—Basil H. Liddell Hart
Strategy

*The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan—that is, forced regime change followed by nation building under fire—anytime soon. But that does not mean it may not face similar challenges in a variety of locales... In this kind of effort, the capabilities of the United States' allies and partners may be as important as its own, and **building their capacity** is arguably as important, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself.*

—Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
Foreign Affairs, May/June 2010

The strategic “pivot” to Asia and its ostensible focus on China’s rise may come as welcome reprieve from more than a decade’s worth of focus on large-scale counterinsurgency. Nevertheless, to associate this new direction outlined in the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) exclusively with China, the reemergence of great-power politics, or anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) threats indicates a highly selective reading. The document notes that “*the Joint Force will need to recalibrate its capabilities and make selective additional investments*” to succeed in ten “Primary Missions of the U.S. Armed Forces.”¹ The first mission listed, and the one most often overlooked, is “Counterterrorism and Irregular Warfare.”²

¹ US Department of Defense, *Sustaining US Global Partnership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, 4.

² US Department of Defense, *Sustaining US Global Partnership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, 4.

Some may misguidedly question any continued emphasis on irregular warfare. At the root of this skepticism is a confusion of irregular warfare in general with the specific case of large-scale counterinsurgency operations, so undesirable in light of the frustrations of Iraq and Afghanistan. It has already become popular to dismiss counterinsurgency as a “failed strategy,” and even to encourage forgetting the past decade’s lessons, as did much of the military and academia following withdrawal from Vietnam four decades ago. Policymakers and strategists may want to wish irregular warfare away, though all indications point to a continuing trend of intrastate conflict.³ The costs of intervention in irregular wars abroad may be unpalatable in light of the past decade’s experiences, particularly given looming austerity. With these wishes in mind, it is necessary to balance between the extremes of over-reaction on one hand, and being carelessly dismissive on the other.

Looming fiscal austerity has not lessened the utility of small-scale approaches to irregular warfare, as analysts continue to recognize. An April 2013 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report explains, “A new model for employing special operations forces would follow the approach used in Colombia and the Philippines, where special operations forces planned ongoing campaigns that use numerous advisory, civil affairs, and informational activities to assess and address those governments’ weaknesses in providing security and remedying underlying sources of conflict.”⁴ The DSG, like the CFR report, emphasizes the “small-footprint” aspect of these operations: “Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership... *Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives*, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities.”⁵ These “low-cost, and small-footprint approaches” seem innovative to the un-indoctrinated, but somewhat routine to a relatively small

³ See National Intelligence Council (NIC), *Trends 2025: A World Transformed*, available at <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-global-trends>. Also reference the Correlates of War Project data, available at www.correlatesofwar.org.

⁴ Linda Robinson, *The Future of US Special Operations Forces*, Council on Foreign Relations Special Report Number 66, April 2013, 14.

⁵ US Department of Defense, *Sustaining US Global Partnership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, 3.

community of career advisors spread across the special operations community. This study's intent is to elucidate low-cost, small-footprint approaches from the strategic perspective. A framework based on intervention theory and practice will be used to examine some of the most notable small-scale FID engagements for the purpose of facilitating strategic thought.

Background and Terms of Reference

The focus of most civilian and professional military education is particularly narrow regarding the topic of irregular warfare—most are familiar with the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Each of these operations is characterized by large budgets, great manpower commitments, and a frontline role for US combat forces. An alternative “model” is presented by a number of IW scholars and practitioners. The author will refer to this approach as “small-scale FID.” Small-scale FID missions have kept partner nations in the lead combat role and utilized fewer than 2,000 advisors—typically far fewer. The annual budget for each of these missions has been \$1.5 billion or less—frequently much less. Proponents of this approach tend to reference several prominent examples of US training, advisory, and assistance to states plagued by internal conflict. Several of these examples are ongoing, or at least matters of very recent history. The most commonly-cited modern case is Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P). The mission has even been featured in popular travel literature, as one journalist wrote in *Outside* magazine: “Welcome to the tropical Philippine island of Jolo, where life is like a Corona ad—coconut trees, white-sand beaches, bathtub-warm seas. Except those guys in the water are U.S. Green Berets, and those kids on dirt bikes are jihadists known for kidnapping Western tourists. Even stranger? On this front, at least, America seems to be winning.”⁶

As strange as the OEF-P example may seem, similar cases exist in other theaters. US assistance to the armed forces of Colombia is another commonly-cited example. Several hundred advisors have assisted a Colombian-led effort that has markedly reduced the influence of a formidable insurgent foe, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). There are a number of other

⁶ John Falk, “Terror in Paradise: The Deadly Battlefield Where America is Actually Winning the War,” *Outside* (February 2007): 74.

recent or ongoing examples in addition to the Colombia case, including the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) and Operation Flintlock, which involves not one but several North African countries. This text will make note of ongoing operations in the Philippines, Colombia, and North Africa as a matter of necessity based on their modern relevance and frequent reference. However, this study will instead focus on the two most frequently referenced historic examples, for they offer the benefits of hindsight and some semblance of finality, unlike the more recent missions. These two frequently-cited historic examples are US aid to the Philippines during the Hukbalahap Insurrection (1946-1956), and to El Salvador during its internal war with the *Farabundo Martí Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) movement (1980-1992).⁷ The Philippine and El Salvador examples are rightfully claimed as successes. Strategists can make the best use of the lessons from these successes by understanding the conditions that enabled the advisors, not merely by mythologizing them.

US involvement in the anti-Hukbalahap campaign came immediately after World War II when communist guerrillas challenged the viability of the new Philippine state. The budget and manning for the mission were small, though it will be demonstrated that there is much more to the story of American and Filipino success. During the Hukbalahap Insurrection, the average number of permanent party US advisors was less than 70. The average annual budget was around \$321 million (corrected for inflation) and also benefited from surplus World War II equipment. That budget is substantial, but significantly smaller than that for large-scale counterinsurgency missions and also lower than several other post-World War II security assistance efforts. The anti-Hukbalahap campaign has been described as a model counterinsurgency operation for its cheapness and efficacy. It is important to recognize, however, that local conditions made this possible; these may or may not be present in future scenarios.

⁷ The Hukbalahap Insurrection was named after the main insurgent group in central Luzon following World War II. “Hukbalahap” is a shortened version of the title *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon*, or “People’s Anti-Japanese Army.” The Hukbalahap originated as a resistance movement during the Japanese occupation, but continued to fight against the government, primarily over land-tenancy issues that will be detailed in chapter four.

Like the anti-Hukbalahap campaign, American assistance to El Salvador involved a small number of advisors and a budget which, while substantial, was tiny in comparison to the bills for larger counterinsurgency missions. Vice President Richard Cheney compared El Salvador to the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan during a 2004 debate, positing the 1980s intervention as a model for the contemporary missions.⁸ Cheney's comparison is especially telling with respect to both understanding and misperceptions regarding small-scale IW. Invoking the Salvadoran example as analogous to the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan is problematic for two reasons. First, Cheney's comparison is a good example of the tendency to present these sorts of engagements as a "model" applicable to a range of circumstances that is far wider than this study will argue to be reasonable. But recognizing Cheney's error is *not* an admonishment of small-scale approaches to IW. On the contrary, it is the stark difference between Iraq and Afghanistan on one hand and the Salvadoran case on the other that make the relative success of the latter so astonishing and compelling. The number of personnel deployed to Iraq averaged 106,000 and peaked to 161,000 with the 2007 "surge."⁹ The annual budget for Operation Iraqi Freedom was approximately \$195 billion.¹⁰ The authorized number of advisors to the El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) was a mere 55 with an average annual budget of just \$200 million 2013-dollars.¹¹ Put another way, for every

⁸ Cheney invoked the El Salvador example's success, suggesting that elections in Iraq and Afghanistan would have a similar effect. From Vice President Richard Cheney, 4 October 2004 Vice Presidential Debate, transcript, Federal Document Clearing House, Lanham, MD.

⁹ The total cost of OIF remains a subject of dispute. The Department of Defense, Congressional Budget Office, Congressional Research Service, Rand Corporation and a variety of other think-tanks and media outlets arrive at significantly different numbers. One important variable explaining the difference is whether healthcare costs for wounded personnel are included. This study has interpolated between studies that do include such costs, and those that do not. One good source for OIF and OEF costs is Amy Belasco, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues*, Congressional Research Service report R40682 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2 July 2009), 6-9.

¹⁰ Slightly over 1 billion dollars in military aid were granted over the 12-year period. Corrected for inflation, this equates to roughly 200 million 2013-dollars annually.

¹¹ El Salvador mission budget information available in Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1991) and Todd Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

advisor in El Salvador there were nearly 2,000 personnel in Iraq, and the prior mission could have been executed 975 times with the latter's budget. Still, the two missions are not comparable in many important ways. To suggest that an El Salvador construct could have been used to deal with post-invasion Iraq would be an error. The numerical comparisons merely express the relative smallness of the intervention in El Salvador and missions like it. The size of the US intervention does not necessarily correlate with success.

Methodology and Preview

The Philippine and El Salvador cases are important examples of successful small-scale interventions, but their status has gained a sort of mythology among advocates that obscures the conditions that either enabled or impeded success. For example, much of the literature documenting US assistance during the Hukbalahap Insurrection centers on two dominant personalities: Philippine President Ramón Magsaysay and his personal advisor, then Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lansdale. The focus on these two individuals is warranted: they were the embodiment of an inspirational national leader in a time of crisis and the epitome of the American advisor. Nonetheless, a certain overemphasis on their personal exploits has also obscured some important historic details. Similarly, much of the literature dealing with the Salvadoran case highlights the mission's success without adequately dealing with the significant challenges faced by the advisors, namely related to human rights violations. Conversely, literature critical of American aid to El Salvador tends to focus on human rights violations at the expense of attention to broader strategic issues, including how the actions of advisors may have actually helped the plight the victimized civilians.

This study will provide background, an analytical framework, and a thorough review of the two case studies to enhance the strategic understanding of small-scale FID. First, several of the most frequently-cited examples of small-scale FID missions will be described to ensure that these missions are distinguished from other sorts of intervention. Next, literature pertinent to small-scale FID will be reviewed, demonstrating three major perspectives on the mission. These three perspectives on intervention highlight both the risks and opportunities that strategists must weigh when considering small-scale FID,

though sometimes in imbalanced ways. That cost-benefit analysis will be used to form the first element of a framework to evaluate FID missions. The framework will be supplemented by considerations geared at assessing the likelihood of small-scale FID success based on both the partner nation's and intervening force's disposition.

The framework that is developed in section three will be used to analyze the anti-Hukbalahap campaign and US aid to El Salvador. A chapter detailing the history of each case will establish a baseline understanding of the given intervention, followed by a chapter that uses the framework to analyze the mission's execution.

Finally, conclusions based on the aforementioned analysis will be presented and leveraged to make several recommendations pertinent to future FID, theater security cooperation, and partnership strategies. This study will not yield any simple strategic prescriptions or checklists to deal with future irregular warfare. Nonetheless, the function of elucidating the important differences between often-conflated modes of engagement should serve to inform strategy in an era that demands more affordable approaches to intervention.

CHAPTER 2

Small-Scale Foreign Internal Defense in Practice and Theory, 1945 to Present:

Cases, Opposition, and Advocacy

We faced a very similar problem ten years ago... today El Salvador is a whole of a lot better off because we held free elections. The power of the concept is enormous. And it will apply in Afghanistan, and it will apply in Iraq as well.

—Vice President Richard Cheney
October 2004 Vice Presidential Debate

Interventions in the internal affairs of other states always attract some measure of controversy. This is especially true for a democratic superpower like the United States. Large interventions such as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) may be characterized by high controversy at the national level. Small foreign internal defense (FID) missions generally do not spark significant controversy, but might if the public perceives that the intervention is anathema to American values or interests. The operations examined in this study all had advocates, detractors, and those who wished to do more. Strategies for intervention were products of political compromise because American interests were never universally agreed upon by advocates and detractors.

FID is predicated on the expectation that the intervener's military and civil advisors can influence favorable change in a partner nation (PN). The past decade's frustrations in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted an outside power's limitations to politically and socially reengineering a foreign state. Despite this, it is important to recognize that more humble and limited FID missions have successfully assisted PN militaries in ways congruent with American interests. These more limited missions aimed not at the wholesale reengineering of a foreign state, but rather to harmonize with local context and guide events in a favorable direction. Advisors must therefore seek to find overlapping interests between the US and PNs, and to try and employ assistance to reform the latter to the maximum possible extent—but no more than that.

This section outlines several historical cases of missions that were compromises between non-intervention and the more direct employment of American force. The review will demonstrate that these missions can be considered as a category apart from larger counterinsurgency campaigns, conventional interventions, or humanitarian missions. Nevertheless, important differences become clear between individual cases of small-scale FID missions. Next, a literature review will outline the two disagreeing positions of anti-interventionism and small-scale FID advocacy, and call to attention some approaches that fall between those two poles. The literature review will emphasize the anti-interventionists' concerns and advocates' ambitions so that each may be weighed when considering small-scale FID as a strategic option.

American Small-Scale FID since World War II

The international situation in the aftermath of World War II was characterized by decolonization, rebuilding in European and Asian states ravaged by battle, and the ideological struggle between liberal democracy and communism. The first and last of those characteristics spawned a series of proxy wars featuring limited involvement by the United States and Soviet Union. The last two characteristics dealing with rebuilding and ideological competition inspired the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan. Those two policies sought to rebuild war-ravaged allies in a manner that kept them in the democratic sphere of influence. In several cases, the pursuit of those strategies meant bolstering a PN's ability to counter communist insurgency. President Truman gave a speech emphasizing the threat of communist insurgencies in March of 1947 that is used to mark the beginning of the Truman Doctrine. That speech specifically highlighted one case where a democratic country was in jeopardy of falling to a communist insurgency without significant outside support. The case the president spoke of was the Greek Civil War.

Greek Civil War

American assistance to the Greek Army in its Civil War against the communist National Liberation Army (ELAS) from 1946 to 1949 presents a case of small-scale FID that dwarfs most others in size and scope. The British had been supporting the democratic Greek government's internal security effort with a large presence of combat troops including 1,400 advisors assigned to train the

Green National Army (GNA). The question of American involvement was raised in Washington when it became clear that the British could no longer finance their own advisory mission. Secretaries of State Cordell Hull and successor E.R. Stettinius wished to stay away from messy interventions that could be construed as neo-imperialist ventures, and a war-weary public had little appetite to commit significant land forces.¹ Yet both General George C. Marshall and statesman George Kennan pointed out that Greece was likely to fall to communist forces if America did not intervene.² Kennan even championed the idea of sending two US combat divisions to seal off the borders with Greece's communist neighbors to deny sanctuary and resupply. The controversy in Washington led to a compromise between Kennan and Marshall's enthusiasm on one hand, and those who found the idea of "pulling British chestnuts out of the fire" repugnant on the other.³ This compromise resulted in a mode of intervention that kept Greek forces in the lead combat role and focused the American effort on training, equipping and advising.

While the strategy fell between two extremes, it is important to recognize that the aid was quite sizable compared to other small-scale interventions. The United States shipped 174,000 tons of military equipment to Greece in 1947 alone, and by one estimate was spending \$10,000 to kill a single guerrilla.⁴ This aid helped to double the size of the GNA to 145,000 by 1948.⁵ The American Joint US Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) in Athens included a minimum level of 450 permanent-party advisors. This number is quite large compared to the other Cold War FID campaigns reviewed in this study. For example, the anti-Hukbalahap mission in the Philippines was manned by an average of around 60-70 advisors while intervention in El Salvador was limited to 55. America's sizable support to Greece led to a victory over the communist ELAS movement in an environment that Anthony James Joes called, "A nearly ideal setting for a major US effort to stop communist

¹ Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 162.

² Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, 162-163.

³ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, 163.

⁴ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, 163.

⁵ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 102-103.

subversion.”⁶ The conditions were so favorable because the Greek government was highly receptive to US advice and ELAS made horrible missteps by abusing the population and shifting to conventional tactics against the strengthened GNA. The largess of American aid combined with the favorable environment led to a highly-successful FID mission that kept Greece within the orbit of democratic states.

Georgia Train and Equip Program

One much smaller post-Cold War case is the Georgia Train and Equip Program, or GTEP. GTEP featured American advisors building the capacity of the Republic of Georgia’s military to fight Islamic militants in the Pankisi Gorge, which borders the restive Russian regions of Chechnya and Dagestan. GTEP spanned roughly 18 months from 2002 to 2004 and dedicated \$64 million to training four Georgian Battalions and helicopter aircrews.⁷ The 18-month infusion of aid and training was followed up by smaller advisory engagements spanning half a decade. Training was conducted by several teams of US Army and Air Force special operations forces, US Marines, and a small number of British advisors. The program has been credited with Georgian reestablishment over control over the Pankisi Gorge region. GTEP’s news is not all positive, however. Some observers highlight that the infusion of US aid emboldened the Georgian military in ways that provoked Russia’s 2008 invasion of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁸

Plan Colombia

A much larger post-Cold War FID mission has been conducted in Colombia against the *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia* (FARC), and is still ongoing. The FARC was established in 1950 and persisted as a powerful left-wing insurgent movement for several decades. The rising popularity of cocaine in the 1980s dramatically increased the FARC’s revenues, which grew to an estimated \$100-200 million annually in the 1990s.⁹ The FARC’s

⁶ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, 183.

⁷ Alan J. Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions*, Rand Corporation Report MG509, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Co., 2006), 88-89.

⁸ Stephen Watts et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Military Interventions*, Rand Corporation Report MG1226 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2012), 23.

⁹ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 363.

estimated strength included 20,000 well-trained, battle-hardened fighters, and the group held positions close enough to Bogotá to fire mortars into the city in 2002 just minutes before the election of the new President, Alvaro Uribe.¹⁰

The “Plan Colombia” initiative was formulated by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana as a six-year plan to end the decades-long insurgency. Plan Colombia took effect in 2000 and, along with the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), led to significant increases in American aid. The plan also broadened American assistance, which was initially centered only on counternarcotics, and allowed aid to focus directly on terrorist and insurgent threats.¹¹ This plan has made Colombia one of the world’s largest recipients of US foreign aid and training, which averaged around \$750 million from 2000-2006.¹² The number of advisors authorized to assist in Colombia is 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors, though one author has highlighted that the number of military personnel has typically been closer to 500 at any given time.¹³ The FARC has been severely reduced from its 1990s strength, and is now seen more as a narcotics-trafficking organization than a credible threat to the endurance of Colombia’s government.

Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P)

Along with the mission to Colombia, Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines has been noted as a success story, though it is still ongoing. OEF-P began in 2002 following an agreement between President George W. Bush and Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as an effort to combat Islamic militants from Jema’ah Islamiyah (JI), the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The FID mission has been manned by an average of 600 American advisors and an average annual budget of \$58 million. OEF-P has largely been hailed as a successful mission since JI and ASG—the most radical of the three aforementioned groups—have been severely reduced,

¹⁰ “Deadly Welcome for Colombian Head,” BBC News World Edition Online, 8 August 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2179834.stm> (accessed 10 May 2013).

¹¹ Connie Veillette, *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report*, Congressional Research Service Report RL32774 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 22 June 2005), p. I, available online at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32774.pdf> (accessed 10 May 2013).

¹² Veillette, *Plan Colombia*, 1.

¹³ Andrew Feickert, *US Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia*, Congressional Research Service Report RL 32658, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 26 August 2005), p.17.

most of their high-level leadership being killed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. At least one author has approached OEF-P critically, but the vast majority of observers understand OEF-P to be highly successful at this time, and they stand on solid ground.¹⁴ The recent “Bangsamoro Framework” agreement has granted moderate elements of the MILF autonomy in exchange for operating legally as a legitimate political party. Small numbers of ASG and JI personnel that remain are still pursued by the AFP.¹⁵

Additional Cases

Despite these noted success stories, several small-scale FID missions could fairly be called failures, to include FID in Pakistan following 9/11 and in Mali as a component of Operation Flintlock. Both of these stories are very recent and problematic as case studies based on issues of classification and operational security. For that reason, it is impossible to examine their execution at the operational or tactical level. Nonetheless, what can be said about these two cases is illuminating to this study’s focus on the use of small-scale FID as a strategic option. Firstly, the fact that they can be classified as failures lends caution to any notion that such missions “always work.” Second, it is quite clear that both cases were conceptually failed as strategic options, regardless of what occurred at the operational and tactical levels. Mali’s central government never had a realistic chance for sufficient governance of the country’s expansive desert, and the small amount of aid was unlikely to change that fundamentally. The Pakistan case was pursued based on that country’s high importance to global counterterrorism and the mission in Afghanistan, but was severely hindered for reasons far above the advisors’ or Special Operations Command Forward-Pakistan’s purview.

Each of the six cases noted above and the two that this study focuses on were similar in their relative smallness. The “smallness” of the small-scale FID approach becomes clear when compared to larger counterinsurgency missions in terms of fiscal cost and manpower commitments. Charts 2.1 and 2.2

¹⁴ Mark Munson, “Has Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines been a Success,” *Small Wars Journal*, 5 April 2013. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/has-operation-enduring-freedom-philippines-been-a-success> (accessed 7 May 2013).

¹⁵ Government of the Philippines, 15 October 2012, “Bangsamoro Framework Agreement,” <http://www.gov.ph/the-2012-framework-agreement-on-the-bangsamoro/> (accessed 10 May 2013).

compare average annual budget and manpower commitments of Operation Iraqi Freedom to all eight of the aforementioned examples combined.

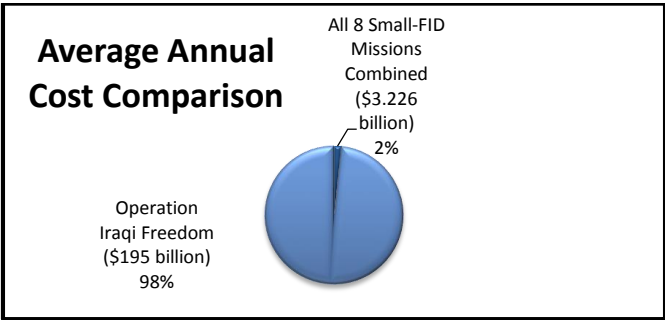


Figure 1: Average Annual Mission Budget Comparison
Source: Author's Original Work. Annual budgets for individual missions are interpolated from numerous sources included in the bibliography of this study.

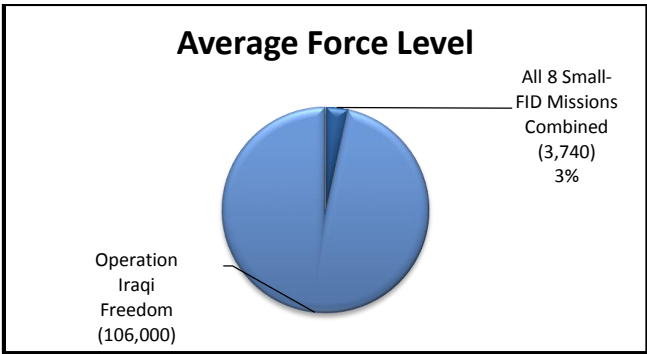


Figure 2: Average Manning Commitment Comparison
Source: Author's Original Work. Average manning commitments for individual missions are interpolated from numerous sources included in the bibliography of this study.

One 2006 Rand Corporation study expresses this point of comparison between small-scale FID and large-scale counterinsurgency in a different way: "... the United States could conduct one El Salvador-level effort... in every country in the world for far less than an OIF-level involvement in some future counterinsurgency. Likewise, the United States could conduct 16 interventions at the level of GTEP (\$64 million) for the cost of a single-El Salvador type effort.

Stated another way, as of June 2006, OIF has already cost 4,500 times as much as the GTEP program.”¹⁶ This comparison is important because it clearly demonstrates the fact that all interventions are not created equal. Nevertheless, it is critical to note that small-scale FID is not necessarily an alternative to larger intervention in all cases. Moreover, there are important differences between individual cases of small-scale FID.

Chart 2.3 attempts to capture some of the differences between small-scale FID missions. The missions are compared based on average annual budgets corrected for inflation to 2013 dollars and average manpower commitments.

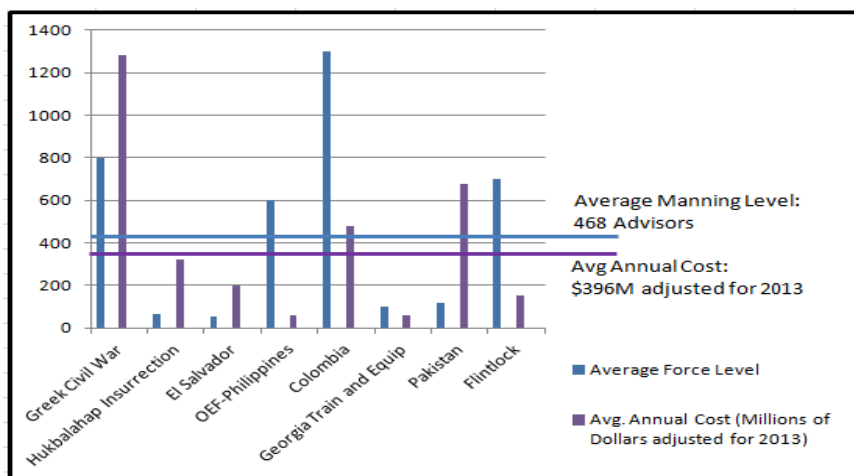


Figure 3: Small Scale FID Missions Compared by Annual Budget and Manning Commitments

Source: Author's Original Work. Average annual budgets and manning commitments for individual missions are interpolated from numerous sources included in the bibliography of this study.

The blue and purple horizontal lines respectively indicate the average annual levels of commitment for all eight cases. Relative comparisons between these missions yield four different categories of commitment: low-cost/low-manning; low-cost/high manning; high-cost/low-manning, and high-cost/high manning. Each of the eight operations is plotted below on Chart 2.4. It is important to emphasize that this diagram only compares these missions to one another.

¹⁶ Vick et. al., *Airpower in the New Counterinsurgency Era*, 91.

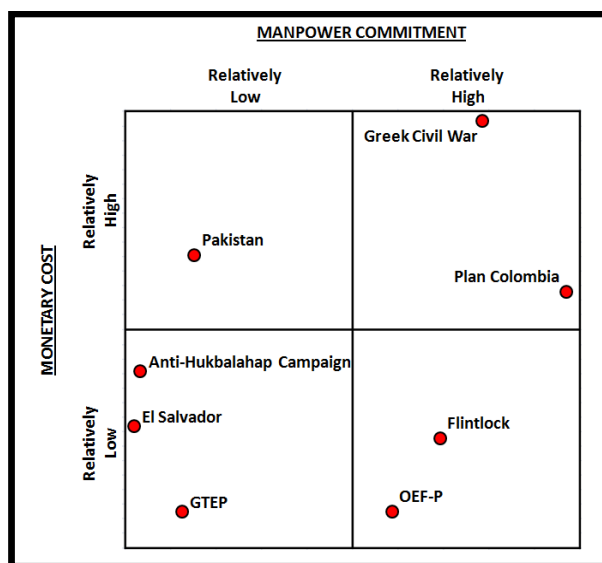


Figure 4: Relative Costs and Manning Commitments of Small-Scale FID Missions

Source: Author's Original Work. Average annual budgets and manning commitments for individual missions are interpolated from numerous sources included in the bibliography of this study.

Chart 2.4 emphasizes that the small-scale FID approach can be tailored and will likely differ based on contextual factors. These contextual factors include American grand strategy at the time of intervention, the nation's economic condition, the preexisting capacity of the PN, and the size and capabilities of the insurgent force. For example, the manning dedicated in the Pakistan case was limited by the government of that country, yet it was seen as sufficiently important to vital American interests to warrant significant expenditures. Some future scenario may allow for a larger contingent of advisors working under greater fiscal constraint. That alternate scenario would be more similar to OEF-P than any other case, though there are many other relevant variables not considered in Chart 2.4 that differentiate cases. For example, it is necessary to highlight that the budgetary statistics used to create the four previous diagrams do not take into account transfers of surplus equipment. Such transfers were significant both in the case of the Greek Civil War and anti-Hukbalahap

campaign. Additionally, Charts 2.3 and 2.4 do not include non-military economic aid, which is arguably more important during irregular war than military aid.

The list of small-scale FID interventions provided herein is certainly not exhaustive, but it does highlight some of the most important and frequently-cited examples. A lengthier account may also include US assistance to several African countries hunting the Lord's Resistance Army, for example. Like Flintlock, that case deals with several states instead of one, making for a more complicated comparison. Additionally, all of the cases noted were primarily or exclusively American efforts. A rich history of comparable British and Soviet cases would add to a more comprehensive study. Much of what has been written about small-scale FID specifically advocates based on several cases, or cautions against intervention almost categorically. With that, we turn our attention to the academic literature relevant to small-scale FID.

Literature Review

Literature focusing on the history and strategy of small-scale interventions either falls distinctly into the category of anti-interventionism, advocacy, or somewhere in between. Anti-interventionist literature focuses on intervention in general, not just small-scale FID. Authors espousing anti-interventionism oppose interference in the internal affairs of other states writ large, except under very select conditions. The other extreme is not a photographic negative of the anti-interventionist stance for it does not advocate unrestrained intervention. Most of the literature favoring small-scale intervention is written to *advocate* such action. Advocacy is often done by those seeking the growth of the communities and agencies that execute such missions, which may be a worthy cause. Nonetheless, advocacy often glosses over the limitations of what it advocates in the spirit of calling attention to the successes of individual cases.

Anti-Interventionist Literature

There are several main strands of opposition, the first of which asserts that intervention is simply wasteful, as large states have more to lose than gain. A related point straightforwardly asserts that these sorts of interventions simply do not work. Realist international relations scholars Stephen van Evera and

Barry Posen are two of the most outspoken critics of intervention who use this line of reasoning. The thrust of their works is evident in the straightforward titles of their articles on the subject, “American Intervention in the Third World: Less Would be Better,” and “Why Europe Matters and Why the Third World Does Not: America’s Grand Strategy After the Cold War.”¹⁷ Van Evera and Posen jointly suggest in the latter article that America has three areas of interest—Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Northeast Asia—and third world adventures should be avoided.¹⁸ The reasoning behind the conclusions of Van Evera and others is based on the structural realist school of international relations theory. Structural realism in particular is important because of its popularity among many military thinkers.¹⁹

The second brand of skepticism accuses that this sort of assistance usually aids corrupt, oppressive, abusive regimes undeserving of US support. For example, one Rand analyst made the following observation: “Binding America’s interests with power structures that have proved incapable of [governance] necessarily bind the US to possibly unpopular, probably corrupt, and certainly ineffective governments. This hardly serves America’s long-term

¹⁷ Stephen van Evera, “American Intervention in the Third World: Less Would be Better,” *Boston Review* (October 1991), 18-31, and Stephen Van Evera, “Why Europe Matters and Why the Third World Does Not: America’s Grand Strategy After the Cold War,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2, (June 1990): 2-24.

¹⁸ Stephen van Evera, “American Intervention in the Third World: Less Would be Better,” 18-31, and Barry Posen and Stephen van Evera, “Overarming and Underwhelming,” *Foreign Policy*, Issue 40, (Fall 1980).

¹⁹ Realism encompasses a range of international relations theories that can be linked back to several common first principles. These principles suggest that the international arena is anarchic (no governing body that truly controls the activities of states), that actors are self-interested (not altruistic), and that states are the primary actors in international relations. There are variations of realism, including classical realism and structural realism, the latter sometimes being referred to as neorealism. Many self-proclaimed realists also espouse anti-interventionist positions, but intervention is not necessarily incompatible with the first-principles of self-interest, anarchy and the primacy of the state. Many FID missions are so small that even anti-interventionist realists may not recognize them as “intervention,” a term that carries significant baggage in their lexicon. For more information on realism reference Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed., (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 4-17. For more information on Structural Realism in particular, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979).

interests.”²⁰ One recent example that has drawn this sort of attention was the Malian coup of March 2013, executed by military officers who had received US training and assistance.²¹ The author of one *New York Times* article opined, “American military training has long served as the cornerstone of important strategic relationships, enduring officer-to-officer connections and improved performance on the battlefield. But U.S. military training has also churned out more than its share of future coup plotters, human rights abusers and presidents for life.”²² These sorts of critiques are particularly common in mass media outlets and popular literature.²³ The critique is often accompanied by populist themes that decry “nation building abroad” in favor of “nation building at home” instead.

The final critique of intervention alleges that situations in distant states’ internal conflicts are simply too foreign, mysterious, and complex for Americans to enter without bungling and making situations worse. Related to the “mysterious foreign culture argument,” skeptics also caution against intervention due to the potential for unintended consequences.²⁴ The critique

²⁰ Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Rand Corporation Report R4042 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1991), xii.

²¹ Craig Whitlock, “Leader of Mali Coup Trained in US,” *Washington Post*, 23 March 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/leader-of-mali-military-coup-trained-in-us/2012/03/23/gIQA7Q6WS_story.html (accessed 5 May 2013).

²² John Norris, “American Assistance is Spread too Widely,” *New York Times*, 8 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/04/07/a-lesson-in-futility-for-the-pentagon/american-military-assistance-is-too-widespread> (accessed 10 May 2013).

²³ Investigative reporter Dana Priest is one of the most outspoken media critics of FID with the longest-running record for opposition. For example, reference Dana Priest, “Free of Oversight, US Military Trains Foreign Troops,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 1998, p.A01, and Dana Priest, “Special Forces Training Review Sought,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1998, p. A25. For perspectives in popular literature claiming that “COIN doctrine” has never worked, reference Rachel Maddow, *Drift: The Unmooring of America’s Military Power* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 209, or Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America’s War in Afghanistan* (New York: Blue Rider Press, 2012), 201.

²⁴ Stephen Watts suggests that the highest risk is the escalation of commitment beyond what was initially anticipated, possibly resulting in two undesirable scenarios: the partner nation uses the aid in ways contrary to US interests, or the US mission becomes entwined in a local situation far more than anything that coheres with grand strategy.²⁴ One example of the first concern deals with US assistance to the Republic of Georgia. The Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) has typically been viewed as a highly successful advising effort which assisted in the near-eradication of Al Qaeda-linked Chechen insurgents in the Pankisi Gorge area. However, in 2007, The Republic

that rests on the exotic and untranslatable confusion of foreign cultures often depicts intervention as a uniquely American activity, based on a propensity for attempts to “engineer” solutions to complex problems.²⁵ Noted theorist Eliot Cohen’s first published work, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies*, exemplifies this approach. Cohen noted, “The Green Berets were enormously popular for a short time – in effect, a national fad. They were a typically American gimmick, because they embodied the American engineering and problem solving approach.”²⁶ Another author asserts that, “The contentiousness and complexity of these intrastate conflicts make it difficult for the sponsor to succeed.”²⁷ This perspective misses that small-scale FID engagements are not intended as silver bullets to resolve the issue of complexity, but rather, such complications are often more surmountable than is assumed when aims are modest.

Many critiques related to the three noted thus far assert a linear relationship between the size of the intervention and the magnitude of expected results, suggesting that small-scale interventions simply do very little. One 2012 Rand report asserts that, “Outside intervention is generally superfluous or at least matters only at the margins.”²⁸ That statement echoes the sentiment of Rand analyst, Jennifer Morrison Taw, who noted with respect to intervention in the Philippines that “[while] training foreign militaries in Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) skills is very limited, and therefore does little harm, it can

of Georgia used US-granted equipment to confront separatist elements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, prompting the Russian counter-invasion, clearly not in accord with US interests in the Caucasus. Stephen Watts et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 23.

²⁵ This critique even has an analogue in fiction and cinema. See *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene and *The Ugly American* by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer. Each features the theme of Americans in Southeast Asia trying to superimpose American culture onto unique local dilemmas. Each text will be revisited in the following section on the Hukbalahap insurrection.

²⁶ Eliot Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 88.

²⁷ Maj Ty L. Groh, “An Unwholly Trinity: The Challenges of Proxy Warfare” (master’s thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2007), 14.

²⁸ Stephen Watts et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 69.

also do little real good.”²⁹ These critiques do not consider the variety of intervention methods sufficiently, though they do bring to light that meddling in the affairs of foreign states comes with risks. These risks are heightened by overambitious “reengineering” attempts and may be complicated by collusion with human-rights abusing regimes. Nonetheless, as the two case studies explored later suggest, small-scale FID does not always involve a headlong-plunge into a quagmire.

Small-Scale FID Advocacy

One of the prime advocates of small-scale intervention is retired Army Colonel Hy Rothstein, a Naval Postgraduate School professor and career Special Forces officer. Rothstein argues that general purpose forces (GPF) and special operations forces (SOF) focused only on raids have offset the victories garnered by Special Forces in his book *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*.³⁰ Rothstein recommends the establishment of a separate military branch of service to conduct FID and unconventional warfare (UW) to ensure such missions are handled properly, unhindered by bureaucracy. Australian theorist David Kilcullen concludes *The Accidental Guerrilla* by similarly suggesting an organization that looks like a resurrected Office of Strategic Services, but with a stronger civic arm.³¹ Others have echoed this sentiment in modified form, suggesting the establishment of a new “Department of Strategic Operations,” comprised of military and civil advisors to conduct whole-of-government FID in a manner unencumbered by Department of Defense bureaucracy.³²

Many of the observations made in literature advocating FID are useful, but there is little advice in terms of how to conduct small-scale FID well. Few recommendations are made, aside from those urging increased budgets or autonomy for organizations that conduct FID and UW. These works tend to

²⁹ Jennifer Morrison Taw, *The Effectiveness of Training International Military Students in Internal Defense and Development*, Rand Corporation Report MR172 (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1993), 22.

³⁰ Hy Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006).

³¹ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 288-289.

³² MAJ Jeremy L. Simmons and CPT Steven P. Basilici, “Transformation: A Bold Case for Unconventional Warfare” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterrey, CA, 2004), 108-110.

avoid any criticism of the strategy or conduct of small-scale FID, as it would deprive advocacy of its energy.

Advocacy literature's energy often derives from a comparison of small-scale intervention with large-scale counterinsurgency missions to emphasize the prior's desirability and greater likelihood of success. One Rand study from 2006 focusing on aviation FID commented, "If intervening early against an insurgency can be equated to an ounce of prevention, *remedial counterinsurgency* is the pound of cure."³³ Remedial counterinsurgency here refers to small-scale FID targeted at situations where insurgencies have not yet gone through rapid growth. Contemporary advocacy of this approach usually highlights OEF-P or Plan Colombia. For example, former *Wall Street Journal* editor Max Boot follows a discussion on OIF and OEF with the following observation: "Almost forgotten amidst these major developments is a tiny story in Southeast Asia that may offer a more apt template than either Iraq or Afghanistan for fighting extremists in many corners of the world."³⁴ Boot did well to highlight the difference between OEF-Afghanistan and OEF-Philippines, but drawing the distinction is only the first step toward effective intervention strategy.

Advocacy can enhance effective intervention strategy when a necessary capability's potential is under-appreciated, but there are also some drawbacks. Small-scale FID is certainly underappreciated as a strategy option, but advocacy inherently focuses on its many advantages at the expense of elucidating an understanding of its limitations. The contexts of the commonly-referenced FID successes like the Philippines and El Salvador were defined by factors that may or may not be present in future scenarios. Comparisons with OIF and OEF are useful to distinguish between types within the wide range of irregular warfare (IW) missions. A further step is needed to advance the study of small-scale interventions by drawing distinctions within that family of strategic options. Deeper distinctions between interventions form the focus of a third take on small-scale intervention.

³³ Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era*, 70.

³⁴ Max Boot and Richard Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-Intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to be Working There," *The Weekly Standard* Vol. 14, No. 16 (5 January 2009): 1.

A Third Approach

Commented [M1]: Why is this underlined?

The final genre of literature aims at a balanced approach weighing small-scale FID's potential risks and advantages. This third approach seeks not to make sweeping categorical claims against intervention, nor does it aim to emphatically support small-scale FID. The standpoint described here is actually *compatible with advocacy* though, because its purposes are different. It recognizes that an important element of good advocacy is recognizing not only the strengths but also the limitations of what is being championed. The third approach emphasizes that small-scale FID will work in some cases but not in others, unsurprisingly, like any other mode of employment.

A 2012 Rand study entitled *The Uses and Limits of Small-Scale Military Interventions* clearly fits into this category, though it has some noteworthy shortcomings despite its many merits. The authors rightly observe that their "... findings do not yield simple policy prescriptions. They do, however, caution against viewing minimalist stabilization as a panacea. Modest resource commitments generally yield modest results. In some circumstances such modest results will be adequate to secure important US interests. In other cases, they will not, and in some cases the under-resourcing of interventions may have catastrophic results."³⁵ As valid as that statement is, the study fails to capture the essence of small-scale FID as it is understood by those versed in its execution.

The 2012 Rand report betrays a superficial understanding of FID that leads the authors to conflate highly-dissimilar interventions based on arbitrary math. The report classifies "minimalist interventions" based on the formula of less than one advisor for every 500 PN residents. That ratio is based on a number that is one-tenth of, "the doctrinally accepted force-to-population ratio of 20 security personnel for every 1,000 residents."³⁶ The Rand team acknowledges that this number is "somewhat arbitrary," a statement with which this author concurs.³⁷ Based on this formula, even Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan qualifies as a small-scale intervention of the same type as the US mission to El Salvador in the 1980s. OEF-Afghanistan was

³⁵ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, xvi.

³⁶ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 11.

³⁷ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 11-12.

characterized by more than 63,000 forces—32,000 being American—and assumption of front-line combat operations until 2009.³⁸ By comparison, El Salvador had a force cap of 55 trainers with prohibitions on direct assistance including combat operations. Based on the Rand analysts' formula, intervention in the Philippines during the height of the Hukbalahap Insurrection in 1951 could have been nearly 42,000 (the peak number was less than 100). A modern intervention in the Philippines could include nearly 190,000 US troops (OEF-P is typically manned at around 600). A notional intervention in Indonesia could include as many as 485,000 troops, not far below the peak of involvement in Vietnam. The 2012 Rand Study does not capture the essence of small-scale FID as those who have conducted it understand the mission. The math of the study's authors leads to the inclusion of cases that clearly do not fit into the category of small-scale FID missions discussed earlier in this chapter.

The 2012 Rand study does offer some empirical analysis that materially contributes to the study of small-scale interventions, despite the noted shortcomings. The study examines over 100 cases of intervention in intrastate wars, dividing them into small and large interventions for quantitative analysis. The levels of difficulty in operating environments are distinguished based on relative comparisons of PN and insurgent strength, yielding the following three categories: benign, moderate, and difficult. The study makes two important conclusions dealing with intervention outcomes. First, it is noted that large interventions almost always target the most challenging environments. Smaller interventions tended to be used more often in moderately-challenging environments. There were good chances that the PN would lose to the insurgent without outside assistance in the moderately-challenging scenarios.³⁹ Second, the researchers concluded that while the small interventions did not appreciably increase the probability that the state would “win,” they did decrease the likelihood that they would *lose*.⁴⁰ In other words, intervention led to a greater likelihood of a negotiated settlement where the PN government

³⁸ Amy Belasco, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues*, 9.

³⁹ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 33-37.

⁴⁰ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 35-38.

retained some hold on power, which may be all that is needed to achieve US objectives.

All three categories of reviewed literature exhibit distinct and potentially harmful misunderstandings about FID. The third approach was the most balanced, though it is still maturing. The advocates understand the essence of these missions much better, but pay insufficient attention to failure in FID. Similarly, advocacy literature does not sufficiently emphasize the particular conditions that allow FID to work well when it does, besides the skill of the advisors and smallness of their contingent. An awareness of those conditions is not a matter of criticism against FID. To the contrary, awareness of favorable conditions is essential to future successes in the mission. Not only should practitioners highlight the cases that cater to success, but understand how they differed from failed instances. Conversely, anti-interventionism does not provide any useful advice for dealing with small states, besides avoidance, which is not always desirable. Additionally, anti-interventionists categorize all involvement in the internal affairs of foreign states into one compartment, despite significant differences.

It is the author's experience that many officers and enlisted men tasked to conduct FID do not have a sophisticated understanding of their mission's place in American grand strategy. Many can trace mission tasking back through operations orders, theater strategies, and FID doctrine. Nonetheless, explaining why these small engagements matter to grander American security interests is more elusive. The following chapter will work forward from the general errors exhibited in the three previously-reviewed categories of literature to help clarify proper objectives and necessary strategic considerations for small-scale FID. The three approaches' shortcomings will respectively be addressed in a framework designed around American interests and the costs necessary to pursue them, conditions for success, and a more nuanced understanding of small-scale FID.

CHAPTER 3

Cost, Advantage, and Intervention:

A Methodology for Assessing Small-Scale Foreign Internal Defense

Vital interests are not fixed by nature, nor identifiable by any generally accepted standard of objective criteria. They are instead the products of fallible human judgment, on matters which agreement within the nation is generally less than universal.

—Bernard Brodie
War and Politics

Once political authorities decide to intervene, a brief period ensues when events are plastic and operational choices still exist.

—Todd Greentree,
Crossroads of Intervention

The previous chapter demonstrated that much of the literature on small-scale foreign internal defense (FID) ignores some of the most basic considerations about whether an intervention serves grand-strategic purposes and how likely it is to work based on contextual factors. Those opposed to intervention highlight risks based on issues of interest and the costs of protraction. These theorists ignored the potential advantages that intervention may afford and are generally uninformed about irregular warfare. Small-scale FID advocates explained how risks associated with protraction in large-scale counterinsurgency can be bypassed. Still, advocacy literature tended to avoid discussing how small-scale FID can work so well in some cases but not in others.

Small-scale FID is neither always a bad nor a good idea, despite what its opponents and advocates may assert. Certain contextual factors can help or hurt the chances for small-scale FID to work well. Advisors have control over some of these factors, but only in a limited way. This section will introduce one factor over which advisors have little control. That factor is termed **absorptive capacity**, and refers to the partner nation military's "ripeness" for accepting, internalizing, and utilizing American assistance. Factors that strategists and advisors *can* influence through good planning and flexible execution are the **sustainability, integration, and organizational socialization** of new capabilities. These factors, both out of the advisors' control and conversely subject to their influence, will be considered in light of the potential risks and advantages of intervention. This combination of considerations will form a framework for analyzing small-scale FID missions.

This section will consider the costs emphasized by interventionists and the advantages noted by advocates in an objective manner. Next, the notion of a partner's *absorptive capacity* will be explored to inform an understanding of their ability to accept assistance. Finally, a FID plan's consideration for properly integrating and sustaining the partner force will be developed. These elements of interest, absorptive capacity, and FID planning considerations will form the basis of a three part framework. That framework will then be used to analyze the cases of the Anti-Hukbalahap Campaign and El Salvador's Civil War, beginning with costs.

The Potential Costs of Intervention

Cost may come in the form of blood, treasure, and prestige. Moreover, these factors may multiply when an intervention is escalated in size, expense, or intensity. The calculus of the strategist considering the economy-of-force value of small-scale intervention is well summarized by one author who simply stated, "Why fight when someone else will do it for you?"⁴¹ The same author shortly thereafter summarizes a valid counterpoint: "Not only does the enemy get a vote, so does the proxy force."⁴² Small-scale interventions that work "by, with, and through" partner nation (PN) forces come with complications not present in the realm of "regular" war fighting. Complications stemming from the partner force are surmountable, but must be acknowledged when deciding whether or not to intervene, and if so, who to choose as partner forces. The choice of a partner force is important, not only for the obvious reasons that arise based on the "proxy's vote," but also based on that force's ability to absorb and employ the aid rendered in a manner consistent with the sponsor's policies. Assistance may be wasted if it is inappropriate to the PN's needs or level of technical proficiency. Strategists must consider the cost even when the sort of assistance granted meshes perfectly with the PN's needs, and the most obvious costs are those measured in terms of manpower and treasure.

Human and Fiscal Costs

This framework quantifies fiscal costs using annual mission budgets corrected for inflation. Manpower will be quantified in terms of personnel

⁴¹ Maj Ty L. Groh, "An Unwholly Trinity: The Challenges of Proxy Warfare" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2007), 9.

⁴² Groh, "An Unwholly Trinity: The Challenges of Proxy Warfare," 6.

deployed to conduct and support advisory missions, and in terms of casualties. Numerical comparisons are relatively straightforward, but must be considered in context.⁴³ To appreciate the varied scopes of operations, it is important to consider these numbers in light of the size, population, and gross national products of the respective partner nations.⁴⁴ Moreover, while human and fiscal costs are subject to quantification, important considerations are more subjective, namely matters of international and domestic prestige.

Prestige

Interventions may yield costs or benefits related to ideology or international prestige depending on whether or not they succeed. There is significant disagreement among international relations theorists regarding the importance of prestige. This study will not attempt to resolve this tension, but the notion of prestige will be considered as a framework element when discussing the perceived importance that strategists felt to “win” in the Philippines, Vietnam, El Salvador, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The emphasis placed on prestige will be highlighted for both of the major case studies and used to draw conclusions for small-scale intervention strategy.

Escalation

A final factor that must be considered to evaluate the cost of interventions is escalation. Policymakers and strategists have waged two types of small-scale interventions: those which have stayed small despite calls for growth, and those that have escalated beyond initial expectations. The prior category includes cases such as the Philippines and El Salvador. In each case, there were proponents of significant escalation, but both missions remained tiny in comparison to the counterpoints of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁴⁵

⁴³ The cost of intervention is used by writers and strategists both to argue for and against small-scale FID. The tragic death tolls and exorbitant budgets of Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq are used both to oppose intervention writ large, but also to justify small-scale FID and Unconventional Warfare (UW). Justifications for small-scale IW point to the intended advantage of intervention compared to the relatively low cost of working by, with, and through a partner nation or proxy.

⁴⁴ Another factor is of course military and civilian casualties incurred by the partner nation. The war in El Salvador resulted in an estimated 80,000 dead out of a population of only 5.5 million: most were innocent civilians. The important question for intervening policymakers is whether that scenario was mitigated, facilitated, or marginally impacted by US assistance.

The Vietnam War influenced the situation in Central America in the 1980s. As one author opines, “It is not frivolous to consider that had it not been for Vietnam, the United States almost certainly would have invaded Nicaragua, probably in 1979, to prevent the Sandinistas from coming to power.”⁴⁶ Iraq and Afghanistan may serve a similarly as a brake on enthusiasm for escalation today and in years ahead, as recent developments related to Syria suggest. It will be shown that the avoidance of escalation was more the result of political accident than shrewd strategy in several cases. Hy Rothstein concluded that, “The Department of Defense’s fixation on the Fulda Gap and rejection of counterinsurgency was important to a successful outcome in El Salvador.”⁴⁷ Commenting on the same conflict, former US Foreign Service Officer and University of New Mexico political science professor Todd Greentree notes that, “... the expression of policy was the product of American politics, particularly the context between an assertive Congress and a strong executive during the Reagan administration.”⁴⁸ Small interventions are sometimes the middle ground between one faction’s desire for avoidance and another’s grander ambitions – for better or worse. Skeptics often have reasonable doubts about intervening, but advocates stand on solid ground regarding the potential advantages of intervening in a limited manner.

The Potential Advantages of Intervention: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value

Attributing foreign aid solely to international good will is a profound mistake for an observer of security assistance, foreign internal defense, or unconventional warfare. Individual advisors may be motivated by their own good will and their personal efforts bolstered by camaraderie amongst allies. The strategist, however, understands intervention as strictly a matter of national interest. Greentree noted that, “In their Cold War versions, US sponsored insurgencies were, like other covert actions, tools of *realpolitik*.”⁴⁹ Intervention in humanitarian tragedies may be driven by fundamental national

⁴⁶ Todd Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 10.

⁴⁷ Hy S. Rothstein, “Less is More: The Problematic Future of Irregular Warfare in an Era of Collapsing States,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2007), 281.

⁴⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 17.

⁴⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 10.

values, or considerations of international humanitarian law, but this study considers FID missions exclusively from the perspective of national security and interest. It will be shown that American values and security interests may dovetail when America intervenes in a small state's irregular war, but they may also lead to internal disagreement and conflict. Disagreement over states' interests and the costs worth incurring to pursue them in limited cases makes the issue of limited interventions in small states particularly challenging.

International relations theorist and Notre Dame University professor Michael C. Desch asserts that dominant international relations theories do not offer useful frameworks for great power interaction with small states. Desch provides a framework that categorizes the value of small-states using the terms *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* value.⁵⁰ *Intrinsic* value directly influences the global distribution of power and deals with tangible resources located within a given state. Desch says, "[Some] areas—by virtue of their large, cohesive, and well-educated populations, strong economies, healthy industrial bases essential natural resources, high level of technological sophistication, or large standing military forces—have intrinsic value."⁵¹ He goes on to note that few small states have significant intrinsic value. Those that have it usually do because they harbor significant natural resources, such as oil. On the other hand, states with extrinsic value are not those that harbor valuable resources, but rather:

... areas outside the homeland which have little intrinsic value, but are nonetheless strategically important because they contribute to the defense of the homeland or some other intrinsically valuable areas. A great power must control such areas, have access to them, or be able to deny them to an enemy for at least two reasons: the area is geographically proximate to the homeland, intrinsically valuable areas, or lines of communications between them; and current military technology allows an adversary to use this area to interfere with the great power's effort to secure intrinsically valuable areas... These areas have what I term extrinsic value because they indirectly affect the balance of power.⁵²

⁵⁰ States that possess neither may be said to have negligible value.

⁵¹ Michael C. Desch, *When the Third World Matters: Latin America and United States Grand Strategy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 10.

⁵² Desch, *When the Third World Matters*, 10.

Desch then gives examples of locations that have historically had low intrinsic value, but high extrinsic value. For instance, the British Empire had significant interests in the Seychelles, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Aden, Malta, St. Lucia, Tobago, and the Falklands despite their low intrinsic value.⁵³ Those locations were all waypoints located astride major maritime lines of communication.

The framework used herein will incorporate Desch's concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic value; however, the connection to balance of power is not necessary. A state's intrinsic or extrinsic value exists based on security concerns which may or may not be related to international balance of power. For instance, access to foreign soil to conduct counterterrorist operations may have little bearing in the scheme of great power politics. Nevertheless, issues of access have fundamental implications for questions of regional and global balances of power, a point particularly relevant to the new strategic direction detailed in the introduction of this text.

Small states and the cooperativeness of their government with American statesmen may have important implications for access, which is a facet of extrinsic value. Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) considerations have become important elements of the lexicon of the Strategic Defense Guidance's so-called "Asia Pivot." A2/AD refers to methods—often involving precision-guided munitions—that adversaries may use to deny American land, air, and naval forces the ability to mass before major combat operations. For example, American forces could be massed in Europe prior to the breakout of war with the USSR, or in Southwest Asia prior to either invasion of Iraq. Greater access to precision guided munitions (PGMs) and satellite imagery, however, will make these large concentrations significantly more vulnerable in the future.⁵⁴ The access equation will change based on developments in technology. Small states will play a role in countering adversarial A2/AD as new basing options must be considered.

⁵³ Desch, *When the Third World Matters*, 15.

⁵⁴ For details on the A2/AD situation, reference Andrew Krepenovich, Barry Watts, and Robert Work, *Meeting the Anti-Access and Area-Denial Challenge* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2003).

The geostrategic importance of access is not new and has long influenced relations between great powers and smaller states.⁵⁵ The presence of a critical airfield, deep-water port, or the ability to deny either to an enemy might make an otherwise-impooverished country supremely interesting to a great power. Commenting on 1980s policy on the Caribbean and Latin America, White House Foreign Policy Advisor Jeanne Kirkpatrick explained, “Each of these countries is a strategically valuable asset which the Soviets have displayed determination to preserve. In each country, political control was secured and is maintained with direct Soviet or Soviet Bloc intervention. Each offers the Soviets basing rights. Each government is protected by its own praetorian guard from changing its mind or orientation.”⁵⁶ Kirkpatrick—a realist for certain—advocated a policy based on small-scale intervention for reasons associated with territory and access.

A territory’s extrinsic value is important not only to states, but also to non-state actors. Transnational terrorism and crime make the internal governance and security of certain foreign states important to great powers. Failed states and the ungoverned regions of those with weak central governments are more easily utilized and transited than those well secured. For example, Somalia has extrinsic value for Al Qaeda as a sanctuary and a crucial transfer point for personnel and resources between the Arabian Peninsula and North and West Africa. The United States spends billions of dollars annually to deal with drug-related crime, healthcare issues, and lowered workplace productivity flowing from and through ungoverned spaces. Although the relative importance of transnational terrorism, crime, and failed states remains a controversial subject in policy circles, all three are generally contrary to US national interests. The focus of controversy is not whether or not these issues are important, but rather *how* important they are. The answer to this question influences the amount of cost that it is reasonable to incur in preventative or remedial efforts to deal with these concerns. While some failed

⁵⁵ Issues concerning the Panama Canal, Egyptian President Gamel Abdul Nasser’s annexation of the Suez Canal (1956), the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), and Communist activities in Grenada which led to an American invasion of the island (1983) are all instances when small states were strategically important to great powers for reasons of access.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 30-31.

or nearly-failed states may not always demand US intervention, they may in other cases such as Mexico, Somalia, or the Philippines given their geographic importance.

The sustainment of a friendly government can secure access not only to key strategic terrain, but favorable economic arrangements. The status of tariffs, taxes, and customs depend on agreements with foreign governments. Access to critical resources such as oil or rare-earth metals would certainly constitute intrinsic value. A government friendly to the United States is more likely to negotiate favorably on these matters than a communist or Islamic extremist alternative. It is also important to remember that economic benefits to favorable relations might overlap with more critical extrinsic value concerns related to access. For example, a reporter at a press conference challenged President Ronald Reagan on his stated logic for invading tiny Grenada in Operation Urgent Fury in 1983. The reporter noted that Grenada’s principal export was nutmeg, hardly a reason for the United States to intervene and invade the country. More important than nutmeg, however, was the presence of the 9,000-foot long runway at Port Salines and the access it provided to vital Caribbean sea lines of communication. Those points of extrinsic value were vital concerns to the United States, particularly during the Cold War in which one side’s gains were seen to tip the balance in favor of its adversary.⁵⁷ Reagan replied to the reporter that, “It isn’t nutmeg that’s at stake in the Caribbean and Central America; it’s the United States’ national security.”⁵⁸

Table 1: Varieties of Intervention Costs and Advantages

⁵⁷ The runway would be capable of accommodating the largest Soviet aircraft, including the An-22 and An-124.

⁵⁸ William M. Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States and Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 202.

Potential Costs of Intervention	Potential Advantages Gained by Intervening
1. Human 2. Fiscal 3. Prestige	1. Intrinsic Value 2. Extrinsic Value 3. Prestige

Source: Author's original work.

Critical FID Considerations:

Organizational Socialization, Sustainability, and Capabilities Integration

A potential PN's intrinsic and extrinsic value explains its relevance to American interests, but the appropriateness of small-scale FID to secure those interests depends on other contextual factors. Success or failure in FID missions happens for a variety of reasons that a properly-employed force can influence, and these reasons tend to fall into three categories. The importance of these three categories will be reinforced by published works dealing with FID along with anecdotal reports of experienced advisors. These contributors to success or failure can be clustered into the following categories: organizational socialization, sustainment, and capabilities integration. These three types of causes for failure will be termed ***critical foreign internal defense considerations*** from this point forward.

Organizational socialization, the first critical FID factor, demands that PN militaries have a sufficient understanding of new capabilities at all relevant levels: higher headquarters, staffs, and tactical units. Socializing a capability is challenging during some small-scale FID engagements when the number of advisors is limited, and proper socialization has been forgotten in some cases. In one case of which the author is familiar, a PN squadron was preparing to conduct a major operation including a company-sized infiltration to an area characterized by a significant threat. The PN's aviation arm had been operating primarily in the day and had sustained significant battle

damage and casualties. PN squadron pilots recommended that the mission could be done under the cover of darkness using Night Vision Goggles (NVGs) that their American advisors had trained them to use. The PN's higher headquarters summarily rejected the proposal. The NVG capability was confined to that single squadron and poorly socialized among the staffs in this highly-bureaucratic military. What is also worth note is that the headquarters leaders who rejected the pilots' proposal *were probably wise in their decision* for two key reasons: the squadron in question had almost-never trained with ground teams at night and no other air assets or supporting arms were night-capable. Of course, that same leadership and staff was also at fault for prohibiting sufficient joint training. It was too late for the staff or any advisor to remedy this deficiency once it was time for detailed mission planning. Moreover, the capability has since atrophied further, a sign of poorly-considered sustainment.⁵⁹

Sustainability is the capacity for the partner nation to maintain a new capability for an extended period of time. Sustainability may pertain to supporting an army of a certain size or standard of performance, or the introduction of a new tactical capability to a specific unit. One obvious example is the ability to maintain and repair equipment when it breaks. A more easily-neglected demand is the need to store equipment properly for it to remain viable. Sustainability deals not only with equipment, but also skill sets. Advisors may train a PN force to conduct a new mission, but it is also essential that syllabi and courseware are transferred if the capability is to be sustained. For example, an outside power furnished a country in the US Pacific Command region with an NVG aviation capability in the 1990s to help deal with internal irregular threats. The country providing the equipment provided only NVGs and basic instruction in night flying operations. NVG instructors were not trained, training programs were not turned over, and no one taught the PN how to properly store or fix the devices. Roughly ten years later, only two pairs of goggles still worked and no pilots could fly using NVGs. One pair was kept in the squadron commander's office, like a museum relic. The other pair was

⁵⁹ The anecdote is based on the author's personal experience. This vignette was also used in the author's Air Command and Staff College Small Wars Seminar thesis. The partner nation is not named for reasons of respect and operational security.

apparently used for recreational purposes, such as nighttime moped riding. One soldier claimed that he could see “spirits” with the NVGs.⁶⁰ Instead of focusing on lower-level PN operators, the “train-the-trainer” approach should be pursued to imbue PN instructors with skills to decrease the risk of security assistance effort being wasted. The case detailed above provided an example of inadequate consideration for sustainment, though it must also be noted that the night capability was never fostered in the right ground units, an issue of capabilities integration.

Capabilities integration is the ability to employ means in a way that complements other important functions, not in isolation. States must integrate both military and non-military capabilities in the case of irregular warfare. The establishment of military capabilities without concomitant civic aid may result in an unbalanced approach to counterinsurgency. For example, a rotary-wing NVG capability may be established within a PN military. Unfortunately, the time and money devoted to the NVG flight capability could be wasted if no ground force concurrently becomes able *or willing* to operate at night.

These three factors may appear to be nothing more than codified common-sense. It is worth pointing out, however, that in the experience of the author and other advisors they have all been neglected. Aircraft hangars in some developing countries can become virtual tombs for advanced equipment provided by the United States, such as Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) balls, NVGs, and rescue hoists. Technical manuals written in English, for example, are commonly not translated. If manuals are translated or if the PN has a literate English-speaking group of maintainers, the PN personnel may not be furnished with access to publication updates from manufacturers. Some developing air forces, exhibiting service rivalry far exceeding our own, literally serve their organization’s needs without coordinating with the army at all. Also, many PN militaries cannot afford to sustain some programs without continuing US aid. A condition of dependency may or may not serve US interests, but the latter is usually the case.

⁶⁰ This anecdote is based on the author’s personal experience. The name of the country is withheld for reasons of respect and operational security.

Table 2: Cost, Advantage, and FID Consideration Framework Elements

Potential Costs of Intervention	Potential Advantages of Intervention	Critical FID Considerations
1. Human 2. Fiscal 3. Prestige	1. Intrinsic Value 2. Extrinsic Value 3. Prestige	1. Sustainment 2. Capabilities Integration 3. Organizational Socialization

Source: Author's original work.

Absorptive Capacity

One of the most important, yet least considered aspects when providing security assistance to PN, is the idea of *absorptive capacity*. John L.S. Girling coined the term in 1972 to describe a state's ability to internalize certain forms of economic and administrative advice and assistance. Importantly, Girling notes that aid which cannot be absorbed may actually be harmful to the situation.⁶¹ Tyler Groh astutely recognized that this concept may be applicable to military-to-military development.⁶² This study will demonstrate that the concept of absorptive capacity can be applied in much greater depth and breadth in the assessment and evaluations of FID missions.

A foreign military's absorptive capacity must be considered when determining how the engagement will be crafted, or if it should be pursued at all. A recipient military's absorptive capacity depends on numerous factors, cannot be calculated with certainty, and must be judged subjectively. Challenges in absorption can deal both with equipment or more intangible concerns of ideology, tradition, or organizational politics. Absorptive capacity can be understood by dividing it into *technical*, *fiscal*, *organizational*, and *cultural* terms.

⁶¹ Groh, "An Unwholly Trinity," 23.

⁶² Groh, "An Unwholly Trinity," 23.

Table 3: Factors of Absorptive Capacity	
Technical	Capacity to embrace and maintain new technologies.
Fiscal	Capacity to finance the sustainment of a new capability.
Organizational	Capacity of PN organizational structures to accommodate the proposed capability.
Cultural	The readiness to accept the proposed capability based on cultural factors such as social stigma and language.

Source: Author's original work.

Technical absorptive capacity deals with the ability to embrace new technology based on the degree of specialization and expertise required to operate, maintain or repair it. For example, a military that is having trouble maintaining simple analogue gauges in its aircraft may have difficulty transitioning to digital all-glass cockpits without some serious support. In another example, the simplicity and ruggedness of Russian aircraft like the Mi-17 helicopter have made it easier for developing militaries to absorb than more technologically-complicated American-manufactured Sikorsky UH-60s. Simplicity makes the Mi-17 is the medium-lift helicopter of choice for many developing militaries.⁶³

Organizational change is required for PN militaries to absorb some new capabilities. For example, the advent of tanks and mechanization in the early twentieth century demanded organizational shifts to which some European powers adjusted more readily than others.⁶⁴ It may not be reasonable to expect

⁶³ This made air advising in Afghanistan controversial among legislators who wished to encourage the sole use of American weapons systems. These concepts are also enshrined in American security assistance legislation.

⁶⁴ Eugenia C. Kiesling argues convincingly that French leadership was confident in its strategic disposition coming out of World War I. This may seem hard to believe based on the futility of France's strategy and losses throughout the war. But France saw itself as the victor of World War I and partly attributed this to its approach to the war's final months. This was based on the notion of "methodical battle:" a highly mechanistic conception of maneuver warfare. Tanks were unable to keep up with mechanized infantry and were thus insufficiently appreciated. No organization large and articulate enough to gestate a potent armored capability was formed. Other factors of strategic

a military to adapt to radical innovation without seriously reengineering the organization. Significant organizational reform is usually not an option for the advising party, but it may be. Security Assistance and FID efforts that have successfully brought about radical change in PN organizations have tended to involve relatively large budgets, long timelines, continuous presence, and many advisors.⁶⁵ Usually, however, advisors should be modest in what they expect to change, and the rate that they can expect changes to occur, particularly given cultural considerations.

Cultural factors influence a PN force's ability to absorb some types of change. The most obvious example of a cultural factor is language. For example, serious challenge arises if the technical orders (TOs) for an aircraft or vehicle are written in English, which is not spoken in or understood by the PN's maintenance force. Overcoming this particular hardship is deceptively difficult because the cost to translate TOs can be prohibitive on limited budgets, especially when those manuals run into the thousands of pages. Additionally, there are legal restrictions to translating TOs because even miniscule errors can have catastrophic results, raising liability concerns for defense companies. Significant illiteracy in PN may in some cases haunt the sorts of instruction to which American personnel are accustomed.

Social stigma is a cultural factor that can inhibit the acceptance of new capabilities in ways that are easy to take for granted. For instance, several Latin American cultures associate manual labor occupations with the lower classes.⁶⁶ This bias has translated into low prestige and performance in

culture influenced Germany and Britain leading to varied abilities to absorb armored warfare. Eugenia C. Kiseling, "Resting Uncomfortably on its Laurels: The Army of Interwar France," in Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, eds., *The Challenge of Change* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 1-34.

⁶⁵ The El Salvador case study will demonstrate that significant changes in PN militaries may occur over extended periods of time, even when directed by a relatively small number of advisors. These two cases, however, also had the luxury of significant financial and materiel resources that may not always be available. One of history's most extreme examples of security force assistance was the Soviet Union's work to establish China's Peoples' Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) during the time of the Korean War. This Soviet contingent included nearly 900 aviation instructors to establish fighter, bomber and headquarters capabilities. The Soviets also provided all logistical support. Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 35.

⁶⁶ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 337.

maintenance career fields, as well as low priority organizationally in terms of resources. A capability that demands radical decentralization, to meet an emerging or current threat, may be challenging for militaries that do not have tradition of trusting low-ranking officers or non-commissioned officers, if the latter exist at all. These factors mean that PN personnel may attach a social stigma to capabilities that may seem irrational to outsiders, but will inhibit FID efforts. In another example, a government with a history of military coups conducted by elite units may be hesitant to form a new special operations detachment. Eliot Cohen highlighted the reasonable reluctance of some governments to allow elite units in their militaries in *Commandos and Politicians*, given their perceived propensity to conduct *coups d'etat*, discussed in the previous chapter's section on anti-interventionist literature.⁶⁷ Finally, it must be acknowledged that PN personnel may be reluctant to accept advice in countries in which Americans are viewed unfavorably. In some cases association with American military personnel may even endanger the career or life of a foreign counterpart.

A PN force may be technically, organizationally, and culturally able to absorb a new capability, but unable to support it for a sustained period of time due to *fiscal* limitations. For example, PN forward observers may be trained to conduct artillery or mortar calls-for-fire under realistic scenario-driven conditions. These skills will atrophy, however, if the PN has an ammunition shortage and cannot afford adequate rounds for training. In the author's experience this is especially important when dealing with the introduction of new aviation programs associated with highly-perishable skills, such as NVG operations or close air support (CAS). Limited budgets for training fuel are a frequently-noted impediment to developing advanced tactical aviation capabilities or spreading new skills throughout an existing fleet of aviators.

This chapter has deconstructed the basic issues of cost-benefit analysis, partner-nation absorptive capacity, and considerations critical to FID success. These comprise the elements of the framework that will be used to analyze this text's two major case studies. Chart 3.4 serves as a single-source depiction of

⁶⁷ Eliot Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

the framework. These four framework elements add structure to an analysis of FID, but are not alone sufficient to appreciate the complexity of intervening in irregular wars. For that reason, several concluding considerations must be expressed.

Table 4: Analytical Framework for Foreign Internal Defense Missions

Potential Costs of Intervention	Potential Advantages of Intervention	Partner Nation Absorption Factors	Critical FID Considerations
1. Human 2. Fiscal 3. Prestige	1. Intrinsic Value 2. Extrinsic Value 3. Prestige	1. Technical Factors 2. Organizational Factors 3. Fiscal Factors 4. Cultural Factors	1. Sustainment 2. Capabilities Integration 3. Organizational Socialization

Source: Author's original work.

Final Considerations: Intervention, Irregular Warfare, Time, and Victory

Two case studies are analyzed in chapters four through seven, the Philippines in the 1950s and El Salvador in the 1980s, utilizing the framework above, and considerations below, in order to assess the “success” of the FID missions. Success may mean the decisive defeat of an insurgent force. However, recalling the empirical conclusions of the 2012 Rand study cited in the literature review, more often than not decisive victory is not an attainable or necessary goal for the intervening force. Considerations of success and failure must be reviewed before exploring the context of the Philippines in the next chapter.

Considerations related to time have been the most damning contributors to great power success or failure in small wars. Virtually every theorist of irregular warfare concurs on this point in one way or another. French theorist David Galula notes that “Revolutionary war is a protracted war,” and elaborates, “The revolutionary war in China lasted twenty-two years... The war lasted five years in Greece, nine in Indochina, nine in the Philippines, five in Indonesia, twelve in Malaya, three in Tunisia, four in Morocco, eight in Algeria.

The war started in 1948 in Burma and still goes on, though in a feeble way.”⁶⁸ Following that series of observations in *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Galula begins a section entitled “Insurgency is Cheap, Counterinsurgent Costly.”⁶⁹ Time and cost will benefit the insurgent at the state’s expense. Robert Taber notes in *The War of the Flea* that, “In the political sphere, the government is subjected to a constant, wearing pressure that comes from the great expense and anxiety of the anti-guerrilla campaign and from the constant cry of the opposition, the banks, the business community: *When will it all end* and *What are you doing about it* (emphasis in original).”⁷⁰ As Taber’s title suggests, the insurgent is small in terms of conventional power relative to the state, like the flea to its host. Despite the conventional weakness of the insurgent, “No small nation, and few great ones, can stand the deprivation indefinitely. Yet the painful fact is that the guerrillas, for their part, *can* carry on indefinitely.”⁷¹ One of Sun Tzu’s aphorisms is quoted particularly often to emphasize this point: “there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited.”⁷²

Quoting Sun Tzu to make the point that the US should never engage in irregular wars, however, is misleading. Countries including great powers *have* benefited from protracted wars. These wars include ones that *other* states fight. Additionally, small states fighting protracted insurgencies within their own sovereign territory have little choice but to deal with them in some way. For an intervening power, the issue is not actually protraction. The concern is really public and political will and *endurance*. Commenting on Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P), Max Boot avers that, “One of the beauties of this low-intensity approach is that it can be continued indefinitely without much opposition or even notice.”⁷³ Protestors do not take to American streets

⁶⁸ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), 6.

⁶⁹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 6.

⁷⁰ Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2002), 39.

⁷¹ Taber, *War of the Flea*, 39.

⁷² Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. and trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107.

⁷³ Max Boot and Richard Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-Intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to be Working There,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 14, No. 16 (5 January 2009), 3.

demanding US withdrawal from the Philippines or almost any other place that small-scale FID is conducted. US involvement in the Philippines is temporally protracted, but designed to avoid the issue of public impatience and high cost.

Strategists need to recognize Boot's point to appreciate the usefulness of small-scale FID options, but also should not assume that such missions will never be controversial. As comparatively tiny as the US engagement in El Salvador was (55 trainers), it is easy to forget how contentious it was at the time, as Chapter Six makes clear. US assistance to Pakistan has been also been contentious for a variety of political and military reasons. Nevertheless, small-scale FID engagements involving between several dozen or hundred advisors are conducted annually in dozens of countries. These small missions are virtually unrecognized by the public, despite the fact that the fact and location of such deployments are routinely disclosed by the Department of Defense. This inattention lends credence to the notion that small-scale interventions may challenge certain truisms about the futility of US intervention in protracted wars. The state may weather much in intervention when it is mere noise, surrounded by daily scandal in the media. The conditions of an open "information age" society with a free press may paradoxically *help* the intervening counterinsurgent in this case.

While the duration of irregular wars is often long, they do end either with victory for one side or compromise of some sort. Success for the state in irregular war is usually defined by the reduction of violence to a manageable level, not "decisive" victory. There are examples of irregular wars that terminate with a clear winner and a loser that is completely vanquished, but this is usually not the case. The 2012 Rand study mentioned in the previous chapter divided the results of these wars into three categories: victories for the state, victories for the insurgents, and indeterminate outcomes (compromised endstates). The study's authors concluded that, "Minimalist stabilization does not appear to offer a significant improvement in a supported state's chances of victory, but it *does* significantly decrease the odds of a partner state's defeat."⁷⁴ Minimalist intervention raised indeterminate outcomes (compromises) from 22

⁷⁴Stephen Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, Rand Corporation Report MG1226 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2012), 39.

percent to 46 percent.⁷⁵ Further, it is noted that wars without outside intervention are more likely to end in outright victory for one side, with the odds slightly favoring the insurgent. Many of the cases classified as “state victory” resulted in cease fires, but hardline insurgents nonetheless continued fighting, and in some cases still are.⁷⁶ Success in this sense means the establishment of conditions that are congruent with US interests over time.⁷⁷

The critical consideration of time has been revaluated as a matter of endurance determined by political and public will. The case studies in subsequent chapters are evaluated considering these factors. Success is understood as influence of the situation to create a tolerable level of violence and conditions consistent with American interests. With this, we turn our attention to the case study of US aid to a new nation fighting an insurgency in the immediate aftermath of the more “regular” and decisive Second World War: the Hukbalahap Insurrection of the Philippines.

⁷⁵ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 4.1.

⁷⁶ Watts, et al., *The Uses and Limits of Small Scale Military Interventions*, 29-30 and Table A.1.

⁷⁷ This study took issue with what counted as “minimalist interventions” in the 2012 Rand Study; nonetheless, the data-set includes mostly cases that could be classified “small-scale FID.” The Rand study’s quantitative analysis is thus the best available for small-scale FID at this time, but further analysis that does not include outliers like OEF Afghanistan would be a worthwhile pursuit.

CHAPTER 4

Peanuts for Presence:

America, the Philippines, and the Anti-Hukbalahap Campaign

We are running a war for peanuts, compared to ordinary costs in a campaign against guerrillas.

—Colonel Edward G. Lansdale
A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines

The perspective of over a half century has given the world, including myself, a clearer view of Philippine-American history. In addition, my own experiences and observations and continuous reflections over the years may have given me not only an advantage in appraising the Americans' work in the Philippines but also an understanding of present American intentions in other parts of the world.

—Emilio Aguinaldo
A Second Look at America

Give me 10,000 Filipino soldiers and I shall conquer the whole world.

—General Douglas MacArthur

Immediately following World War II, 10,000 Filipinos were pitted against an opponent that was poorly-trained, corrupt, and commanded by leadership with a poor grasp on guerrilla warfare. That battle-hardened 10,000-man force was the Hukbalahap, a Communist guerrilla movement, and its opponent was the Government of the Philippines, its internal security forces, and its American advisors. The Hukbalahap, or “Huks,” would frustrate efforts by the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to defeat them from 1946 until 1950. Only after significant reforms to the Philippine security establishment and a refocus of American foreign internal defense (FID) would the anti-Huk campaign become what has been called a model counterinsurgency effort.

More than a half-century has passed since the Hukbalahap Insurrection, and along with the declassification of records detailing the advisory mission, the researcher is afforded ample opportunity to reflect on American work and its pertinence to intentions elsewhere in the world. This is especially timely as the U.S. is engaged once again in FID efforts as part of the ongoing Operation

Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P), a mission receiving praise similar to that bestowed upon the anti-Huk campaign. But there are important distinctions between these two small-FID efforts as much as there are similarities. Acknowledging the uniqueness of an individual campaign's character illuminates details helpful for crafting FID strategies useful in a wide range of potential contexts. These differences also help the strategist mitigate the tendency of "templating" between superficially-similar engagements.

Like the ongoing conflict in the southern Philippines, the Hukbalahap insurrection must not be understood as an isolated event in history. The insurrection did not simply begin after World War II nor did it end with the surrender of Huk leader, or "Supremo," Luis Taruc in 1954. In some respects the Huk insurrection continues, albeit in a different form, to this day. This chapter places the Huk insurrection in a broader context by first reviewing the history of colonization and land distribution in the Philippines. Next, the period of American commonwealth and Japanese occupation during World War II will be examined briefly to explain why the conflict escalated in the late 1940s, why America assisted in the ways that it did, and why the campaign was initially so problematic for Philippine government forces. The American role in the resolution of the campaign's early problems will be the chapter's focus. This review will demonstrate that American intervention was necessary to prevent a Huk success, and that unique conditions favored a small-scale FID response. These unique conditions are summarized in Table 4.1 below. Thus, this classic example of successful irregular warfare is best conceived as neither framework nor fluke, but rather as a source to mine for best practices.

Table 5: Contextual Factors Favoring the Anti-Huk Campaign
* Substantial World War II surplus equipment available to transfer to the Armed Forces of the Philippines.
* US had already been in the Philippines for more a half century.
* Korean War distracted higher-level leadership, allowing for adaptive FID execution by advisors in country.
* Archipelago geography and Luzon's isolation denied Huks the possibility of sanctuary or external smuggling lines of communication to deal with their heavy-weapons shortage.
* Large contingent of US combat forces on Luzon, not involved in FID operations.
* Substantial number of non-military advisors already in country.

Source: Author's original work.

State of Perpetual Resistance:

Filipino Colony, Commonwealth, World Warrior

Spanish explorers landed in the 7,200-island archipelago in 1565 and made it the namesake of their King, Philip II. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, Filipino landowners managed tracts of land where tenants worked farms, primarily for cultivating rice and farming *carabau*, a local water buffalo. Luzon, the northernmost of the major islands in the Philippines and the archipelago's rice-basket, was seized by the Spanish and redistributed to colonists. The first major Filipino revolt against this newly-imposed system came in 1567 on Mactan, the same Island where Magellan was killed in battle by Prince Lapu-Lapu, who had refused to pay tribute to Spain's king. The first major revolt in Luzon would break out in Pampanga in 1585. From this point forward, revolts against colonial masters populate a timeline of Filipino history at a rate of nearly one major insurrection per decade. More than 30 named insurrections

have occurred since the late 16th Century, many of those in central Luzon for reasons associated with land-tenure or inheritance.¹

Apart from Spanish administration, a local system of landlord-tenant relations called *datuk* dominated Philippine agrarian society. Peasants farmed the landlords' property, but were free to move from one plantation to another. Landlords won peasant loyalty by paying for weddings, funerals, and offering low-interest loans to the poorer farmers. These relations were generally amicable because landlords depended on peasants for their own safety and to remain agriculturally viable. This could change as wealthy landowners aligned with powerful Spanish or American colonists and new technology enabled farmers to produce higher yields with fewer workers. The Spanish formed large haciendas much as they did in Latin America. Spaniards who participated in the archipelago's conquest were rewarded with large plots of land to be farmed by the colonized peasantry. This condition inspired grievances and no shortage of revolt during the 333 years of Spanish domination.

America's acquisition of the archipelago in the short Spanish-American War was followed by a revolt (1899-1902) which would leave many Filipinos bitter toward their new masters. American occupiers attempted to carry out a more enlightened program of oversight than the Spanish throughout the first half of the 20th century, in the form of educational, social, and economic reforms. This allowed a caste of Filipino businessmen and civil servants to prosper. The civil servants became a new class of elites in Philippine society and they established the same sorts of large plantations that had been deplored during Spanish rule. By 1920 a land-tenancy program was in place that required peasants to turn over 50-70 percent of their crops to wealthy landlords, barely leaving them with enough to survive and no hope of upward mobility.²

Peasant activists demanded that the government break up the large estates in central Luzon throughout the early 1930s. These activists took the

² Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 23-28, 42-43, and Eduardo Lachica, *The Huks: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (Washington, DC: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 121.

name *sakdalistas*, or “accusers.” Tensions between landlords and tenants came to a head in May of 1935 with the *Sakdal Uprising*, which was quickly crushed by the state. Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon attempted some modest land reforms in the late 1930s, but the entire domestic political situation would experience severe upheaval with Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in the spring of 1942.

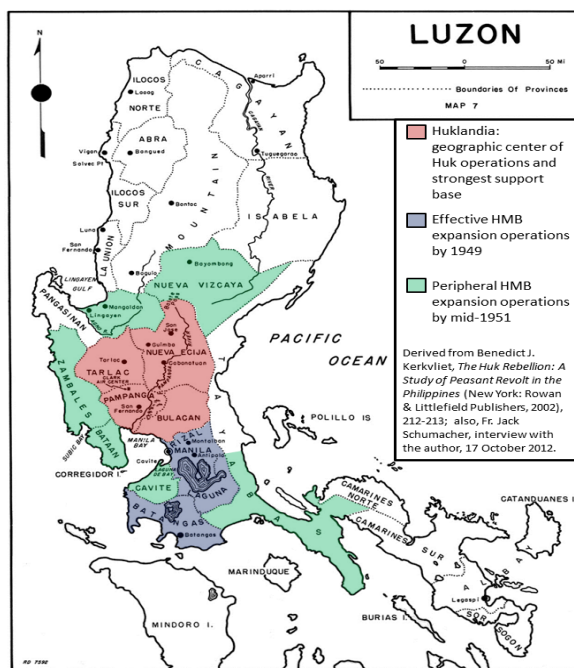


Figure 5: Map of Luzon and Surrounding Islands, Showing “Huklandia.”
Source: Andrew E. Lembke, “Lansdale, Magsaysay, America and the Philippines: A Case Study of Limited Intervention in Counterinsurgency”

caretaker government was established to administer Philippine affairs under domination of the Japanese Army. President Jose Laurel led this government for the Japanese and he relied on the Philippine Constabulary (PC) for internal security and defense. The PC were poorly trained and led by officers with ties to the landed elite. The PC's conduct and allegiance to upper-class elites would earn the ire of many Filipinos, but especially among groups of resistance fighters.

One such group was the Hukbalahap, which stood for *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon*, or People's Anti-Japanese Army. Luis Taruc commanded the group, which was formed of bands initially mustered to defend against plantation civil guards during the presidency of Manuel Quezon before World War II. The Japanese occupation would galvanize these once-rag-tag bands into a corps of experienced guerrilla fighters.⁴ US intelligence reports estimated Huk strength at 10,000 fighters in 1943.⁵ Guerrilla groups under USAFFE control also fought the Japanese but its members had their own grievances with the Huks. The Huks received scant US support based on their left-leaning politics and rivalries with the guerrillas that USAFFE officers trusted.

Huk members felt slighted by the favoritism shown by the Americans to other guerrilla groups. The Huks became even more agitated after the war when their organization was outlawed and the collaborationist PC was officially sanctioned. The same land-tenure issues that plagued central Luzon in the 1930s reemerged to the dismay of an increasingly frustrated and anti-American Hukbalahap movement. The organization's name morphed several times, but in June of 1947 the name *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* (People's Liberation Army) was selected.⁶ This was abbreviated to HMB, but the colloquial label "Huks" was still used most commonly.

⁴ To fight the Japanese and Filipino collaborators, the Huks recruited and even welcomed the Overseas Chinese 48th Detachment of the People's Anti-Japanese Forces. Chinese army veterans acted as advisors to the Huks in the formation of a military training and indoctrination center in the Sierra Madre Mountains known as "Stalin University." Nevertheless, it will be shown that Chinese involvement in the war was grossly overestimated by American intelligence personnel.

⁵ Maj Gen Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 7.

⁶ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 157.

Commander Luis Taruc claimed that the Huks did not lay down their arms during this period mainly as a matter of self-defense and that most rural Huks had no understanding of a comprehensive strategy to overthrow the government until 1950. US intelligence reports at the time indicated that considerable evidence supported the notion that the Huks had legitimate grievance based on the PC's abuses.⁷ The same report revealed that many of the depredations and acts of violence credited to the Huks were actually committed by small bands of bandits and "trigger-happy" youths who have no affiliation whatsoever with the Huks."⁸ Any reader suspicious of the notion that the Huks' grievances were legitimate should consider General Douglas MacArthur's words: "They tell me the Huks are socialistic, and they are revolutionary... If I worked in those sugar fields I'd probably be a Huk myself."⁹

The *Partido Kominista Pilipinas* (PKP) attempted to co-opt the Hukbalahap, believing that collusion with the alienated rural peasantry was natural. The Huks commanded a significant degree of popularity in the rural areas where the PKP had few relationships and little credibility.¹⁰ The PKP's detached and overly-optimistic leadership would be of the greatest benefit to the AFP and Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). PKP leadership, dominated by the Lava family, were intellectuals based in Manila and therefore out of touch with the peasantry. Some PKP members led Huks in the field, but there were rifts between the PKP and Taruc that would persist throughout the insurgency. The PKP's communist credentials also provided a way for JUSMAG to justify assistance to a war-weary US Congress and public. Luis Taruc's brother Peregrino Taruc noted that the communists had difficulties indoctrinating many of the Huks because they simply did not have the same level of concern for international economics, or even matters of Filipino nationalism. He said, "It was hard to make peasants see the connection between their problems and American imperialism. It was especially difficult in

⁷ Lt Col Henry Neilson and Maj Hamilton Reger, "US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands," Record Group 330, Box 74, NARA, 3. Document is now declassified.

⁸ Lt Col Henry Neilson and Maj Hamilton Reger, "US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands," 3.

⁹ General Douglas MacArthur, quoted in Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 38.

¹⁰ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 99.

Angeles, Pampanga, where so many of the people directly or indirectly earned their living from Clark Air Force Base.”¹¹ This condition would be one of many advantages that the Philippine government and American advisors would eventually benefit from during the anti-Huk campaign.

Additional post-World War II conditions contributed to an environment that was ripe for a fruitful US-Philippine internal defense arrangement, if they could only be managed properly. Carlos Romulo, Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, commented on the situation after World War II, noting that Luzon was a “vast warehouse containing the greatest store of military supplies and armaments ever brought together, once destined for the greatest army ever assembled.”¹² Luzon was a prospective launching point for the invasion of mainland Japan, outlined in the plan for “Operation Downfall,” devised in the spring of 1945.¹³ Operation Downfall was unnecessary following the atomic strikes, firebombing, and naval blockade of Japan, as well as the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, but the stocks of equipment in preparation for the invasion remained on Luzon. Thus, the island was teeming both with Americans and military equipment in 1945. Additionally, the weapons available to guerrillas were mostly small arms while heavier equipment was stored in military depots. These factors are important to understand why the anti-Huk campaign involved as much military force as it did initially, why the American advisors emphasized conventional operations during the 1940s, and how the FID mission ultimately became so successful. One component of that success resides with the arms imbalance between the Huks and their opponents, but another important element centers on who the Philippine Armed Forces *were*. Thousands of these soldiers had actually served in the US military. Romulo himself, for example, was a Brigadier General in the US Army and MacArthur’s assistant. The fact that thousands of others, like Romulo, had served in the US Army, would make the matter of absorption different in the Philippines than it is in countries relatively unfamiliar with the American military. Nevertheless,

¹¹ Peregrino Taruc interview quoted in Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 222, 228.

¹² Carlos P. Romulo, *Crusade in Asia: Philippine Victory* (New York: John Day Company, 1955), 83.

¹³ The General Staff of General Douglas MacArthur, *The Campaigns of General MacArthur in the Pacific*, Reports of General MacArthur, 1966, reprinted as Center for Military History Pub 13-3, 1994, 336.

these favorable conditions did not guarantee success and American advisors were unable to take advantage of them for the first few years of the Hukbalahap Insurrection.

Early American Assistance and the Troubled Years: 1946-1950

The AFP and US advisors would ultimately be successful in the anti-Huk campaign but this was far from apparent in the beginning. Their initial steps were largely failures. Early assistance efforts were geared at turning the Philippines over to Filipinos as quickly as possible. Such haste resulted in a poorly administered and disorganized aid program. Poor administration was amplified by central Luzon's state of disarray following pitched fighting in the spring of 1945 when the United States retook the islands. More than 100,000 civilians had died in the Battle of Manila, and much of the city was reduced to rubble.¹⁴ Manila was in such a chaotic state that many American military and consular personnel were hesitant to grant independence on the scheduled date. Nonetheless, the nationalistic fervor and local excitement for the upcoming event led US personnel in the Philippines to realize that denying a timely transition would bring about a serious anti-American backlash.¹⁵ Thus, the situation on Luzon immediately following World War II was one characterized by great instability, transition to a fledgling Filipino government, and growing peasant unrest. A massive infusion of aid and equipment managed by a small number of American advisors led to a condition ripe for pilfering by corrupt local bureaucrats and military officers. Much of the initial aid was stolen by corrupt officials and goods diverted and subsequently sold on the black market.¹⁶

¹⁴ For details of the battle see Richard Connaughton, John Pimlott, and Duncan Anderson, *The Battle For Manila: The Most Devastating Untold Story of World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995).

¹⁵ Parker W. Borg, *The United States, The Hukbalahap Movement, and Ramón Magsaysay* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1965), 22, 53.

¹⁶ Concerns over corruption in the Philippines following World War II are detailed in numerous sources, including the following: Maj Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines – 1946-1955* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 17, and "Conversation Between Ambassador in the Philippines (Cowen) and the Philippine Secretary of National Defense (Magsaysay)," in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1951 vol. VI, Asia and The Pacific, part 2, ed. Fredrick Aandahl, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 1492. Document is now declassified.

Direct US aid to build a strong Filipino military began in 1945 under General Douglas MacArthur, but would be granted in a haphazard manner for several years. The US Army staff officers worked with Filipino counterparts to formulate a national defense plan in anticipation of the country's looming independence, scheduled for July 1946. The military consisted of 37,000 personnel in 1946 and grew substantially to 51,000 by 1954 with US assistance. The force would become considerably more professional as it evolved, but for over four years its harsh actions contributed to Huk recruitment.

Several laws were passed in the late 1940s that would serve as the foundation for US military aid. The Philippine Rehabilitation Act was signed in 1946, which allowed US troops to grant excess World War II materiel to the AFP. The Military Bases Agreement was signed by President Manuel Roxas in 1947, giving the US access most notably to Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base in addition to several other smaller installations. JUSMAG-Philippines was officially established in November of 1947 under the control of the US Department of Defense through the Republic of the Philippines Military Assistance Agreement. This would initially contribute to a FID effort that focused only on combat capability without concern for civic action. JUSMAG was formally reorganized in July 1951 and placed permanently under the US Ambassador with a ranking Senior Advisor, the first being General Leland Hobbs.¹⁷ Hobbs and Ambassador Myron Cowen were eventually able to broaden the FID effort, making it more inclusive of important civic actions.

JUSMAG had only 27 advisors in 1947, but its staff would grow to 68 personnel including civilian administrative assistants by 1953. In comparison to other American interventions in irregular wars, such as Vietnam or Afghanistan, the size of this advisory contingent is tiny. Despite JUSMAG's small size it is important to note that more than 1,500 other consular personnel and several thousand US combat troops were still stationed throughout the Philippines. This ratio of military-to-civic advisors would be the envy of

¹⁷ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, Report of the Chief Advisor for July 1953–June 1955, report, June 1955, Record Group 330, Box 46, NARA, 1. Document is now declassified.

contemporary advisors who lament the lack of a “whole of government” FID capability.

President Roxas declared the Huks to be a “subversive element” that intended to overthrow the legitimate government of the Philippines on 6 March 1948. He vowed to crush the rebellion in no less than 60 days with an all-out onslaught known as the “Mailed Fist,” a term borrowed from the late President Quezon who had dealt with an earlier incarnation of the rebellion in 1939 with an offensive by the same name. The Mailed Fist operation achieved little success as the Huks blended in with the local population. Most of those who fell victim to bombs, artillery shells, or execution were civilians. This predictably increased support for the Huks and made the government even more unpopular. The narrative preferred by many American writers who subsequently wrote about the events was that the corrupt and brutal Filipinos had to be enlightened of the negative consequences of their actions by an ingenious American advisor, Edward G. Lansdale. But before Lansdale’s measures could take effect, US advisors were materially contributing to the excesses of Roxas and later President Elpidio Quirino. The heavy-handed efforts that led to so many civilian casualties were planned by US military advisors under General Albert M. Jones using heavy weapons deemed appropriate for the fight.¹⁸ The month after initiating Mailed Fist, Roxas died while giving a speech at Clark Air Base. Roxas’s ironic death was “predicted” by a female soothsayer in Ilocos Norte who subsequently played an important tactical role in the American FID campaign in the Philippines.

President Roxas was replaced by Elpidio Quirino, who initially made an effort to solve the Huk dilemma through negotiations. Quirino granted amnesty to guerrillas after the failures of “Mailed Fist.”¹⁹ But both sides—the Philippine government and the Huks—made demands of one and other that had no hope of being fulfilled. Huk demands, for example, included complete amnesty and guaranteed protection for all Huks in exchange for any weapons returns. Quirino enacted a cease-fire and arranged for Taruc to return to Manila without threat of arrest so that he could represent the peasants of Central Luzon in

¹⁸ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 49.

¹⁹ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 200-202.

exchange for a cease-fire. Taruc spent two months in Manila and then returned to Central Luzon, stating that he would not negotiate with the government again until they unconditionally ceded to his demands.²⁰ Even while the cease-fire was in effect, the PC and Huks in the field continued fighting as if it never existed. Quirino could not rein in the PC and Taruc's ability to control all of the Huks dispersed throughout the hills and plantations of Luzon was rarely if ever complete.

The uncontrollable PC was more feared by the people than the Huks or any of the criminal bands that roamed the rice and sugar plantations and seedy barrios of Angeles City, Tarlac and San Fernando. The Philippine Constabulary and Military Police in particular were poorly trained. Their frustrations were often taken out indiscriminately on barrio dwellers in a rain of bullets, artillery shells, or ravenous looting.²¹ Philippine forces essentially conducted many massive sweeps that were easy for the Huks to evade, and they brutalized civilians suspected of collaborating out of frustration.²² As a result, the size of the Huk movement continued to grow during the late 1940s because of the PC's excesses.

Serious deficiencies were observed in the AFP's ability to conduct counterinsurgency.²³ The AFP troops were noted by American advisors for their lack of aggressiveness, poor small-unit tactics, and an inability to function at night. Based on this, one assessor noted that the Huks hunkered down in strongholds during the day and slipped away from clumsy AFP sweeps, and that "Virtually all [Huk] violence occurs at night."²⁴ In addition to lacking night training, AFP soldiers received only four hours of jungle-specific instruction in 1950 for a conflict that took place in largely in jungles, among other types of

²⁰ Lachica, *The Huks*, 121-2.

²¹ Lachica, *The Huks*, 121.

²² Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 118. Indiscriminate violence based on frustration and a variety of other causes is not unique to the Hukbalahap insurrection. For specific discussion of the rationale of indiscriminate violence in irregular warfare, reference Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146-172.

²³ Neilson and Reger, "US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands," 3.

²⁴ Military Direct Assistance Inspection Team, "Inspection of the 8th BCT," 1950, RG 330, Box 74, Folder 000.5-333-Philippines, NARA, 4.

terrain.²⁵ The training that was occurring at AFP facilities was repeatedly described as “parade ground training.”²⁶

Despite these AFP shortcomings, the PKP and Huks had some notable faults of their own. While the AFP and advisors initially misjudged the Huks’ strength, so too did the Huks. Huk popularity, membership, and violent activity were on the rise in 1949. Inspired by this condition and the PC’s unpopularity, the PKP decided to escalate and pursue a more conventional revolutionary campaign. In hindsight, this was an unwise move on the PKP’s part. Despite the ineptness of the PC and the Huks’ rising popularity, the latter had significant limitations when compared to other insurgent movements. From the outset, the Huks lacked heavy weapons and sufficient logistics or command and control practices. The most powerful arms they had were .50 caliber machine guns and some small-caliber trench mortars left over from the Japanese occupation.²⁷ Importantly, the isolation of the movement to Luzon and several smaller islands in the archipelago would not afford the Huks any appreciable sanctuary. The geography of the archipelago’s northernmost region also did not bode well for the Huks considering their early shortfalls in heavy weapons and ammunition (see Figure 5). Luzon’s mountains, swamps, and jungles were favorable to insurgents. Nevertheless, the isolation of these areas from any prospective sanctuary or external smuggling lines of communication favored the counter-guerrilla efforts of the state.²⁸

In addition to geographic isolation, the increasing audacity and excesses committed by the Huks in the late 1940s would eventually contribute to their decline. Quirino’s reelection campaign in November 1949 was conducted with such corruption that it drove even more frustrated Filipinos into the arms of the Huks. But instead of capitalizing on this additional support the Huk leadership preferred instead armed action over political mobilization and the movement’s

²⁵ Neilson and Reger, “US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands,” 3.

²⁶ Neilson and Reger, “US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands,” 9.

²⁷ Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerrilla Leader* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, Inc., 1967), 88.

²⁸ The Sulu Archipelago - where the maritime borders of The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia meet - is freckled with tiny islands covered by triple-canopy jungle, which is ideal for the piracy, smuggling and general lawlessness that has characterized that region for centuries.

motto became “Bullets not Ballots.”²⁹ In one case, a Catholic Priest was quartered in front of his parishioners for giving information to government troops.³⁰ In another instance, an aggressive Huk commander named Alexander “Commander Stalin” Viernes led a section of men to murder the late President Quezon’s wife Aurora, her daughter, and son-in-law. These would be the first of many depredations committed by the Huks that would make it much more difficult for them to claim the title of “Pampanga Robin Hoods.”

The growing violence of Huk attacks was of increasing concern to American advisors, statesmen and businessmen by 1949. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, for example, voiced his concern to leaders in the Department of State regarding the safety of US servicemen and their families at Clark Air Base. Numerous acts of violence had been committed against them, but it was unclear whether or not the perpetrators were linked to the Huks.³¹ President Quirino was dismayed at the Americans’ concern, and suggested that the PC were capable of ensuring their safety.³² Numerous American media outlets began predicting the collapse of the Philippines and its undesirable implications for US policy and prestige in the region.³³

These growing concerns in America coincided with significant favorable reforms within JUSMAG-Philippines. While American advisors focused on conventional capabilities during the conflict’s first few years, the focus of the FID mission was also redirected toward civic reform and counterinsurgency in late 1949, and focused more on political improvement and economic aid and less on military measures. National Security Council (NSC) 84/C—a newly crafted strategy for the Philippines—was geared not at “crushing” the Huks, but to “...persuade the Philippine Government to effect political, financial, economic and agricultural reforms in order to improve the stability of the country.”³⁴ As a result of such reforms, the security situation began to show improvement for

²⁹ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 52.

³⁰ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 66.

³¹ “Letter from Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson to Department of State,” *FRUS*, 1949 vol. VII, *The Far East and Australasia*, 511.245 96/4-1949, 592-593. Document is now declassified.

³² “The Charge in the Philippines (Lockett) to the Secretary of State,” 896.001 Quirino/8-849, telegram, *FRUS*, 1949 vol. VII, *The Far East and Australasia*. Document is now declassified.

³³ Borg, *The United States, The Hukbalahap Movement, and Ramón Magsaysay*, 6-7.

³⁴ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 120.

the Philippines in 1950. As one form of evidence of improvement, Huk casualties increased by 12 percent from the previous year while AFP casualties decreased by 23 percent.³⁵ More importantly for the overall success of the campaign, intelligence tips from the local population regarding the identity and location of Huks increased.³⁶

As early as 1948 the Philippine defense establishment was already undergoing modest reforms to address shortcomings of the military in its campaign against the Huks. One such reform was that division-sized sweeps of the Roxas era were replaced by more mobile operations conducted by much smaller and more agile Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), which began to phase-in during the late 1940s. In addition to these reforms, specialized AFP units began operations disguised as Huks to confuse the enemy. The first such unit was called “Force-X” and was created by PC Colonel Napoleon Valeriano. The operations of Force-X were apparently quite effective in confusing the enemy. On at least one occasion, two Huk units engaged in an intense firefight with one another because they mistook each other for the AFP “imposters.”³⁷ On another occasion, Force-X personnel disguised as insurgents shared barbecued ribs and potato salad with a Huk unit in the Zambales province and once they had finished their meal, they massacred the guerrillas.³⁸

President Quirino made some additional modest reforms in 1949, though the most important changes would occur in mid-1950. The anti-Huk mission was officially transferred from the Department of the Interior to the military on 26 July of that year.³⁹ Quirino also removed lackluster Secretary of National Defense Ruperto Kangleon and replaced him with Ramón Magsaysay in September of 1950.

³⁵ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 134.

³⁶ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 125. The correlation between greater state control with increased popular collaboration is not unique to the Hukbalahap insurrection. Appreciable research suggests that popular allegiance and information sharing often has less to do with ideological sympathies than self-interested concern for life and limb. The AFP’s increasing proficiency indicated by lower casualties and higher tolls taken by the Huks is consistent with that correlation. For more insight on this matter see Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 87-95.

³⁷ Lachica, *The Huks*, 132.

³⁸ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 125.

³⁹ Lachica, *The Huks*, 130.

The modest reforms of the late 1940s are important to acknowledge because much anti-Huk campaign lore attributes complete credit for success to Magsaysay and Lansdale. This author does not intend to refute the remarkable brilliance and leadership qualities that these two men displayed, or to deny that they were decisive to the outcome. However, a careful examination of the popular literature on the campaign makes it appear that the 50,000-man army's transformation occurred almost instantaneously, an assertion that will make any inquisitive advisor skeptical. Many of the most important reforms began when Magsaysay was only a congressman and took several years to socialize throughout the ranks. The problem under Quirino and Kangleon had been that these reforms were pursued half-heartedly and the AFP was stubborn to change. It would take the energy, charisma, and integrity of Ramón Magsaysay, whose confidence in the reforms and strength of character enabled him to see them through, and eventually to replace the very president who had appointed him.

Ramón Magsaysay, Edward Lansdale, and the Reform Years

Magsaysay, a former bus mechanic, was one of the USAFFE guerrillas led by American operatives during World War II. His USAFFE commander noted his capability and integrity, and placed him in positions of greater leadership.⁴⁰ Magsaysay was promoted to the rank of major by General MacArthur by the end of the war and he became the military governor of the Zambales province. Wildly popular for his integrity and charisma, the middle-class Magsaysay, who had a folksy touch with the population, was urged by the people of Zambales to run for congress. He won the Zambales seat by the widest margin in the district's history. A chance meeting and ensuing friendship with a US Air Force intelligence officer named Edward Lansdale would eventually help propel Magsaysay to the position Secretary of National Defense in September 1950, one unlikely for a former guerrilla from the countryside without any formal military training.

⁴⁰ Borg, *The United States, The Hukbalahap Movement, and Ramón Magsaysay*, 11.

Lansdale and his prolific career as an advisor have become the subject of numerous books, both fact and fiction.⁴¹ Lansdale joined the Army during World War II, leaving a civilian career in advertising, a skill that would become important to his contributions to the field of psychological operations. Following World War II, Lansdale elected to join the newly-independent US Air Force as an intelligence officer and was reassigned to the Philippines. Lansdale had also served with the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency. That assignment would give Lansdale access to significant resources that yielded effects both in combat and Philippine politics—a point of importance and controversy. Lansdale had access to money separate from the JUSMAG's budget, and there is credible evidence that he used these funds to influence at least one election in the Philippines.⁴² Additionally, he operated on a looser leash than most other military personnel in country since he answered to the CIA, much to the ire of one JUSMAG commander.⁴³ Lansdale's association with the CIA has also drawn no short measure of conspiracy theories about his activities in hindsight.⁴⁴

The acceleration of reforms that had been pursued only lackadaisically since 1948 can be traced to Magsaysay's first few months in office in 1950. The new Secretary of Defense fired a dozen high-ranking PC officers within his first 30 days in office for laziness, corruption, or incompetence.

⁴¹ In addition to the three biographical and autobiographical books included in the bibliography, several of the shorter papers and articles focus on the life of Edward G. Lansdale. Additionally, the main characters in two popular and controversial fiction novels are purportedly based on Lansdale. The first is Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, *The Ugly American* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). The second is Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (New York: Penguin, 2004). *The Quiet American* was initially published in 1955 and the author swore it was not based on Lansdale, whom he had a brief interlude with in Vietnam. Lansdale is rumored to have befriended the producer of the movie version of *The Quiet American* to make the Lansdale-like character more likeable, much to the chagrin of Greene. For more details on the topic see Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).

⁴² Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 126.

⁴³ The JUSMAG-Phil commander was Major General Albert Pierson, with whom Lansdale had many famous disagreements.

⁴⁴ See Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War*, and any number of conspiracy theory websites related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Lansdale is an important character in the conspiracy theory surrounding the assassination, and is portrayed in a loosely-veiled fashion by the "General Y" character in Oliver Stone's *JFK*.



Image 1: President Ramón Magsaysay

Source: Official Photograph, Government of the Philippines.

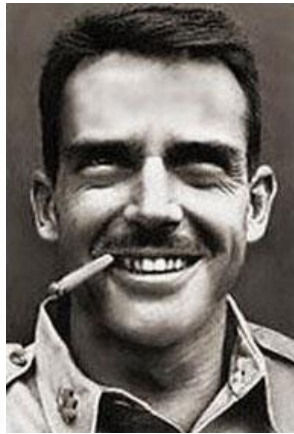


Image 2: Edward G. Lansdale

Cecil Currey, Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American.

Such actions served to put other officers on notice that they could be fired too. To keep PC officers alert, Magsaysay would travel around the country and make surprise visits and inspections, often firing officers on the spot.

The AFP and American advisors benefited not only from Magsaysay's energy for reform, but also from good intelligence combined with plain luck in some cases. One of the most significant days in the campaign's history was to come on 18 October 1950. A communist informant who had turned voluntarily revealed the identity of a female PKP courier in Manila. Surveillance of her travels revealed numerous secret PKP meeting sites. Two-hundred-and-fifty AFP soldiers and 30 Manila police detectives simultaneously raided 22 Manila locations, capturing numerous Politburo personnel and a trove of documents. The mission left the Huks in the hinterlands without central direction and provided the AFP with a wealth of intelligence.⁴⁵

Remarkable improvements were observed after one-and-a-half years of Magsaysay's tenure and cooperation with JUSMAG. Advisors employed the "self-help" principle, which involved a train-the-trainer approach focused on

⁴⁵ Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 63-68, and Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 128.

imbuing AFP instructors with new tactics, techniques, and procedures to disseminate to the ranks. This was highly effective for spreading new capabilities and skills.⁴⁶ The AFP Training Center could accommodate 5,000 students at any time, and had US advisors on the staff.⁴⁷ By 1953 nearly 200 AFP officers and enlisted men were travelling to the United States for specialized training. Twenty-five BCTs were finally in service, with one continuously fighting in the Korean War.⁴⁸ Approximately one-third of AFP patrols were disguised as Huks by the close of 1953. The size of the elite Scout Rangers, whose genesis is explained below, had more than quadrupled between January and December of that year: from 15 officers and 150 men to 70 officers and 700 men.⁴⁹

One of Lansdale's and Magsaysay's innovations was the institution of the "coffee klatch," regular meetings at which ideas were pitched in an informal and relaxed setting. Many of these meetings were held in the apartment that Lansdale and Magsaysay shared on the JUSMAG compound. Lansdale commented on this highly-unusual arrangement between an American advisor and foreign secretary of defense:

Our house in the JUSMAG compound also witnessed the birth of an ideal way for American advisors to be of help in the counterinsurgency. It began in so natural a fashion that I didn't realize at first that a pattern was being set that I would follow thereafter... we realized that the impromptu discussions were turning up so many realistic insights and constructive ideas that they deserved to be held on a better basis. I hosted a series of 'coffee klatch' gatherings at the house, inviting the most thoughtful of the staff officers and combat commanders who had already visited there.⁵⁰

Several of the most important coffee klatch ideas dealt with the reorganization of AFP combat elements. One concept that was initially proposed by an AFP

⁴⁶ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Philippine Country Statement for Presentation of Fiscal Year 1954 MDA Program," Record Group 330, Box 74, NARA, 5. Document is now declassified.

⁴⁷ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Philippine Country Statement for Presentation of Fiscal Year 1954 MDA Program," 5.

⁴⁸ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Philippine Country Statement for Presentation of Fiscal Year 1954 MDA Program," 6.

⁴⁹ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953, report, 1 February 1954, Record Group 334, Box 2, NARA, Annex C, 17. Document is now declassified.

⁵⁰ Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 46-47.

Captain who had graduated from West Point was the Scout Ranger team. One officer and four enlisted men would be trained to operate deep in Huk territory to carry out sabotage, special reconnaissance, and intelligence gathering missions. These teams were interspersed throughout the BCTs. Distributing such units throughout the force had the opposite effect that the establishment of a new “elite” unit separate from “regular” units often does.⁵¹ Instead of envy, the Scout Rangers served as examples to the other soldiers in their BCTs, motivating them to become more proficient.⁵²

Another example of the type of constructive ideas generated by increasingly-creative advisors is contained in a JUSMAG memo entitled “Napalm, Bloodhounds, and Booby-traps.”⁵³ Within the memo, each of these items is requested for their value in seeking out or destroying the Huks in their mountainous central Luzon hideouts in ways that World War II era artillery and conventional munitions could not. Each of these items was already being used to a degree by the AFP. What JUSMAG staff was advocating, however, was an improvement in the each of them to enhance AFP tactics and performance against the Huks. Previous JUSMAG reports, for example, indicate that Filipino “home-brewed” flammable gel was poorly weaponized. Filipino pilots were using L-5 light observation craft to drop napalm bombs in the form of hollowed-out coconut shells.⁵⁴ The following year, the US mission would receive napalm that it could release to the PAF. To ensure that the enhanced munitions were not used in ways that would drive the population back into the arms of the Huks they were placed under a number of restrictions. Napalm could only be released for special missions upon advanced request from AFP headquarters and with the Ambassador’s approval.

Lansdale’s primary contribution to the campaign, aside from his close working relationship with Magsaysay, drew on his advertising skills. Lansdale was crucial in the psychological operations, or “psywar,” conducted against the

⁵¹ For details on the Scout Ranger teams, see Napoleon Valeriano and Charles T. Bohannon, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1962).

⁵² Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 49-50.

⁵³ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Napalm, Bloodhounds, and Boobytraps,” 30 June 1951. National Archives and Records Administration-College Park, College Park, MD. Document now declassified.

⁵⁴ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 119.

Huks in conjunction with military operations. His psywar campaign famously drew upon local superstitions. One of the most famous operations, cited in virtually every account of Lansdale's contributions, is the vampire myth. The same female soothsayer from Ilocos Norte, mentioned previously, established her reputation nationally for predicting the death of President Roxas. Now she warned the population of vampires, or *asuang*, running rampant on Luzon. Lansdale took these warnings and had them spread by Filipino agents throughout different communities via word of mouth. To give the warnings teeth, a detachment of scout rangers was sent to ambush a Huk patrol. The patrol, walking in single file, was allowed to pass and the last Huk was quietly captured. The scout rangers killed him and punctured two holes in his neck, his body hung upside down for the blood to drain from it. The pale body was cleaned and strewn back onto commonly-tread trails. Another Huk patrol discovered the body and word quickly spread among Huk units that the vampire had claimed a victim. Local Huk units reportedly moved their camp and subsequently refused to go on other night operations. In this way the AFP was able to deny the Huks one of their early advantages, superior performance at night, through a simple but effective mix of kinetic and non-kinetic actions.⁵⁵

Superstition was further exploited by seizing on a northern Luzon rumor suggesting that the disturbed soul of a man who died for an evil deed might speak from the grave. A Philippine Army BCT captured a courier who, like many in his village, had supported a local band of Huks. The interrogated prisoner repented for his deeds in a tape-recorded interview. The prisoner was killed and his body placed near a local village near a Huk encampment. After the villagers buried him, a BCT element infiltrated the cemetery at night with loudspeakers and broadcasted the confession, which had been altered to make it sound as if it came "from the grave." The terror-stricken locals vacated the village the next day, and the Huks were forced to look elsewhere for support.⁵⁶ Needless to say, some of these techniques would be more difficult for American advisors to employ today.

⁵⁵ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 102-103.

⁵⁶ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 103.

The appreciation that Lansdale had for integrating civic action into the agenda was ultimately more important than his prolific psyops accomplishments were. One of Lansdale's contemporaries noted, "... psywar of this type was Ed's way of injecting some imagination and humor into opposing the Communists, which was a usually a fairly grim business. I don't think that he thought the efforts were at anywhere near the same level of importance as his political action and pacification/civil action work. They sure do capture the attention of the folks who write about him, however."⁵⁷ Ultimately, the most important contributions would deal with electoral politics.

The Political Approach: Fair Elections, for the Most Part

A fair election was imperative for the Philippine state to regain the legitimacy that the Huks sought to rob. The corrupt 1949 election was a major blemish on the reputation of the new government and the basis for the Huk rallying cry "bullets not ballots." Magsaysay, with Lansdale's assistance, used the military and even ROTC cadets to guard polling stations. The election was an immense improvement compared to 1949, unless you were a Huk.

Lansdale and his agents tampered with the election in ways that counteracted Huk influence. The assistance of a reformed Huk helped Lansdale secure a typewriter from an HMB propaganda cell in Quezon City. Lansdale's agents used the typewriter to produce and disperse false memos, which were designed to appear as if the Quezon cell had made them, urging Huks to boycott the election. Lansdale's contacts stole special paper used by the Huks for purposes of authentication to produce convincing memos. The Politburo initially condemned the cell for acting without instruction, but the pamphlets' *argument* for boycott was so compelling that the leadership actually embraced the boycott strategy that Lansdale had conceived. Needless to say, the Huks' influence was not felt in the 1951 election. In fact, the margin of victory was so wide for Quirino, that Magsaysay and Lansdale were personally invited to a conference in the resort town of Baguio and given a tongue-lashing for making the election such a landslide.⁵⁸ The American advisor's suspected involvement

⁵⁷ Letter from Rufus Phillips III (CC Joe Redick and William Colby) to Cecil B. Currey, 16 Nov 1967, letter, The Lansdale Papers, Air University, Special Collections.

⁵⁸ Borg, *The United States, The Hukbalahap Movement, and Ramón Magsaysay*, 30.

in subsequent Filipino elections would earn him the nickname “Colonel Landslide” in some circles.⁵⁹

The American fiscal contribution may have rivaled the aforementioned political influence in its criticality to the anti-Huk campaign. The most critical dilemmas facing the young nation were economic. An economic report prepared by the Department of State noted that the Government of the Philippines was borrowing from trust funds and similar sources to finance those bills that they did pay. Teachers’ salaries had not been paid in several months and a growing public distrust of the government was detected.⁶⁰ To help remedy this, the Department of Defense received approval from President Harry Truman for the highly non-standard practice of using US funds to pay the salaries of some Filipino troops, as well as to feed them. This was taken from a special allotment of \$10M, some of which was also used in a weapons buy-back program in May of 1951.⁶¹ The money allowed for soldiers to be adequately fed and paid, removing the temptation to loot from the population.⁶²

Magsaysay recognized not only the criticality of improving the AFP soldiers’ economic situation but also that of the Huks themselves, and reforms increasingly emphasized suborning the insurgents instead of killing them. The

⁵⁹ This nickname was originally coined by the Indian Ambassador to the Philippines after Magsaysay’s election to President in 1953. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 131.

⁶⁰ Neilson and Reger, “US Army Interim Report on the Philippine Islands,” Economic Annex, 2.

⁶¹ Maj Gen L. L. Lemnitzer, Director of the Office of Military Assistance, to Maj Gen N. Duff, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army, memorandum, 20 April 1950, Record Group 330, Box 74, Folder 091.3-Philippines, NARA, 4. Document is now declassified.

⁶² “The Ambassador in the Philippines (Cowen) to the Department of State, Manila,” 15 February 1951, letter, 796.001/2-1551, *FRUS*, 1951, 1511. From the outset, Ambassador Cowen recognized that this plan may be questioned. A California voter who became aware of this surreptitious program wrote to Senator Richard Nixon, who immediately began querying about this unusual practice. JUSMAG correspondence with the JCS attempted and succeeded in perception management regarding this matter; but the issue of concern was not this fiscal practice’s legality: “Since it is highly exceptional for the United States to furnish military assistance in this form of direct budgetary aid, and since publication of this exception might result in direct pressure on the United States from other countries for similar assistance, this matter has been handled on a classified basis.” The memo also warned the recipient to “clear this with the White House” before sending the attached unclassified letter to Senator Nixon, since the practice was approved by President Truman. Reference Mr. Frank Nash, to Mr. Lincoln Gordon, Assistant to the Secretary for ISA, Record Group 330, Box 12, Folder 111-FY 50, 51, 52, NARA, 1. Document is now declassified.

Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) program was one creative method for this line of operations. Huk fighters were offered a plot of land, seed, a carabau, and a home if they agreed to surrender and turn over their arms. Nine-hundred-and-seventy-eight families were resettled through the EDCOR program: approximately 5,000 people.⁶³ This only accounted for roughly 15% of Huks that surrendered between 1951 and 1955. Many of those resettled were not actually Huks, so the program has been criticized as ineffectual. However, EDCOR was only part of a broader amnesty program which also allowed captured or surrendered Huks to train in vocational skills such as carpentry or automotive repair.⁶⁴ A relatively small portion of surrendered Huks could be relocated because shipment and resettlement for all would have been cost-prohibitive. Those who credit Magsaysay's broader program with increased rates of surrender stand on firm ground. This ratio of Huks surrendered-to-killed was approximately 1:11 in 1950 when Magsaysay was a congressman. That number was roughly 1:1 by the time he had completed his term as Secretary of National Defense and sat as President for one year in December of 1954.⁶⁵

Table 6: Statistics for Huks Killed, Surrendered, and Captured

(Monthly Averages)	1950	Jan 1953 - Dec 1954
Encounters	63	46
Enemy Killed	156	31
Enemy Surrendered	14	34
Enemy Captured	55	50

Source: Author's original work. Numerical values are based on monthly JUSMAG-Philippines mission reports located at National Archives-College Park, College Park, MD., numerous Record Groups.

⁶³ Glenn Laverne Nordin, *The Future of US-Philippine Relations*, 1960 (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1960), 25. Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, *Monthly Summary of Activities for January 1954, 10 February 1954*, NARA, College Park, MD., 14. Document is now declassified. The HMB began using EDCOR to recruit personnel in late 1953. Recruiters urged peasants to "... be an apprentice, then surrender."

⁶⁴ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 98-99.

⁶⁵ Data for 1950 was taken from Lachica, 131. Data for 1953-1954 was found in JUSMAG Monthly Reports, numerous record groups, NARA.

The data in Table 4.2 also supports the noted Huk trend to operate in smaller units and to avoid contact. Advisors also assessed that the BCTs became much more aggressive and effective at seeking out the enemy by 1953 to counteract changing Huk tactics. While the difference between the numbers of encounters in 1950 versus the conflict's latter years reflected in Table 4.2 was small, the number of killed-in-action had been reduced by 500%, reflecting small encounters of lower intensity.



Image 3: Modern imagery of Buldon, Mindanao. Buldon is a still-inhabited EDCOR village. Notice the difference with the village on the right – the nearest village to Buldon.

Source: Google Earth, accessed 12 April 2013.



Image 4: Village Closest to Buldon

Source: Google Earth, accessed 12 April 2013.

Magsaysay Wins the 1953 Presidential Election

Magsaysay was encouraged to run for President in 1953 after he had become wildly popular for his handling of the anti-Huk campaign. This meant he would have to step down as the Secretary of National Defense, defect from Quirino's Liberal Party, and join the Nacionalista Party. Quirino had become suspicious of Magsaysay and covetous of his popularity as early as 1950, derisively telling the public that "Magsaysay is only good for killing Huks."⁶⁶ The year leading up to the election would be a paranoid one for Magsaysay, who

⁶⁶ Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 106.

along with his bodyguards had already defeated several assassination attempts.⁶⁷ It is surprising that there were not more, given that he fired so many high ranking military officers and had earned a powerful political enemy in Quirino.

On the 6th of November, several days before the election, Magsaysay went to the US Embassy to relay his suspicion that Quirino would attempt to rig the contest. He stated that if this were the case, an armed rebellion was possible, insinuating that it may be carried out by himself and those within the AFP whose loyalty he had gained. He sought the support of the US Embassy, which he hoped would highlight the unfairness of a rigged election if Quirino won, since Magsaysay had clearly become more popular. The US Embassy staff could not agree to this, particularly because they already suspected that Quirino had a mole or some way of eavesdropping on embassy conversations.⁶⁸ Two days later, Magsaysay gave his word to the US Embassy not to incite a rebellion. Declassified State Department documents suggest that the US government was prepared to become slightly more intrusive in Filipino politics if Quirino rigged the election, but clearly could not collude with Magsaysay on such matters before they had actually transpired.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 94.

⁶⁸ "The Counselor of Embassy in the Philippines (Lacy) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison)," 31 October 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, East Asia and the Pacific* – Part 2, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 508-511. Document is now declassified. The original version of this letter was hand-written because the Counselor feared that telegrams were somehow being intercepted by someone close to Quirino. The letter was typed for publication in the *FRUS*.

⁶⁹ "Memo for The Secretary of Defense," 9 November 1953, No. 341 796.00//11-953, *FRUS, 1952-1954, East Asia and the Pacific*, part 2., 565. It seems likely that the State Department would have highlighted the fraudulence of such an election though. One Top Secret telegram from Ambassador Spruance to the Department of State in Washington noted that Vice President Nixon had stated that the "US must not allow Magsaysay to fail." Notes made by Secretary Dulles in the telegram's margin read "I agree with this". Referring to Nixon's comment, the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs commented that "This was mailed for action by me—I don't think it needs any." The scope of interference that higher echelons of US government were willing to take is not entirely clear from this telegram. The Assistant Undersecretary's comment seems to point to the fact that it seemed clear that Magsaysay would win the election and that it would be run fairly enough. "Letter from Ambassador Spruance to DoS," No 345, 796.00/11-2453, 24 Nov 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954, East Asia and the Pacific*, part 2., 565.

The effect of Lansdale's covert involvement in the 1953 election is uncertain, but it is apparent that some attempts at influence were made. It is clear that Lansdale funneled money to the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) and several businesses that may have had interests in Magsaysay's election.⁷⁰ Lansdale's personal collection of letters and newspaper articles include one clipping from the 17 March 1971 issue of the *Manila Times*. Therein, an editorialist suggests that Lansdale's myth was perpetuated by the Pentagon and that US assistance to Magsaysay in the 1953 election was negligible. Penned into the Margin is a note to Lansdale reading: "Ed--Some of us know better--and I think it is better we didn't say so." The letter is signed by "Jack," but it is unclear who "Jack" is.⁷¹

Quirino and some of the Manila press began to focus on Magsaysay's collusion with Lansdale. At that point, Allen Dulles wrote to the Ambassador in Manila to thank Lansdale for his efforts, but to remove him from the Philippines.⁷² Lansdale would subsequently deploy to Vietnam, and Magsaysay would serve his term as president for as long as fate allowed.

Lansdale downplayed his own importance in Magsaysay's success until his death in 1987. It would not be possible for Magsaysay himself to comment--he would die as President when his plane crashed into a mountain in Cebu on 17 March 1957. Ambassador Parker Borg's assessment of the relationship is perhaps the most accurate one available: "It is doubtful the aid provided to Magsaysay could have guaranteed the same effects, had there been nothing behind the solid Magsaysay name."⁷³ In the end, Lansdale must be given the benefit of the doubt that he is due in a paraphrase of Borg's verdict on Magsaysay. It is doubtful that the assistance provided by Lansdale would have guaranteed the same effects, had there been no solid advisory acumen behind the Lansdale name.

⁷⁰ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 106.

⁷¹ "Magsaysay's Legacy -- Revolution of the Heart," *Manila Times*, 17 March 1971, From Lt Gen Edward Lansdale's Books and Papers, Air University Special Collections.

⁷² Ambassador Raymond A. Spruance, to Department of State, telegram, 24 November 1953, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954 East Asia and the Pacific -- Part 2*, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 565. Document is now declassified.

⁷³ Borg, *The United States, The Hukbalahap Movement, and Ramón Magsaysay*, 11.

As President, Magsaysay had made not only operational adjustments, but important contributions to legal processes. Legal disputes between landlords and peasants were almost invariably characterized by the latter lacking legal representation, having to self-represent, and losing in court. Magsaysay established a decree assigning military judge advocates to provide legal counsel and representation to peasants who could not otherwise afford it. This effectively countered the shadow justice system that the Huks had established in some areas of central Luzon. Magsaysay's reforms were not limited to grievances in court, but also dealt with complaints about virtually any government policy. He elicited grievances from the poor throughout the islands by enacting a unique scheme to solicit suggestions from regular citizens. Anyone could send him a telegraph for 10 centavos to complain about injustices anywhere in the country with the possibility for quick resolution. He even made it a point to personally act on complaints whenever possible.⁷⁴

By the time Magsaysay was President in late 1953, the Huks had been significantly weakened. Huks in some remote areas were becoming malnourished, and AFP forces and American advisors discovered that capturing hidden food-stores was a highly-effective tactic.⁷⁵ A trend towards greater Huk dispersal was observed by American advisors in 1953, not only based on the benefit of improved guerrilla tactics, but also due to dwindling numbers. Company-sized Huk elements would move into an area of operations, establish a nucleus, and radiate section to platoon-sized elements outward. Over the year those companies turned into platoons and the elements sent out on patrols were mere sections.⁷⁶ By the end of 1953, a JUSMAG annual report suggested that the PC alone could deal with the Huk problem without assistance from the conventional Army or Air Force.⁷⁷ But despite what these signals of Huk weakness indicate the war was not yet over.

⁷⁴ 10 Centavos was equivalent to less than one American cent, corrected for inflation.

⁷⁵ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953," NARA, 2.

⁷⁶ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953," NARA.

⁷⁷ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953," NARA, 2.

JUSMAG Activities Late in the Insurrection

JUSMAG's strength was 68 advisors by late 1953, but this number can be slightly misleading. Approximately 20 Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) also provided instruction to the AFP in land, air and naval operations.⁷⁸ The size of these mobile training teams is unknown. Modern MTTs usually consist of around 12-13 personnel. If these MTTs deployed on 3-month rotations, they would bring the total manpower in country up to a factor near 100 at any given time. This number is still extraordinarily small, but this approach allowed specialists in technical fields like aviation maintenance or psychological operations to mentor AFP counterparts while permanent-party JUSMAG staff dealt with Filipino leadership.

The technical and fiscal demands of aviation FID late in the anti-Huk campaign offer a source for lessons in absorptive capacity and critical FID planning considerations. Air operations were notably ineffective in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Early in the engagement, advisors were frustrated by the Philippine Air Force (PAF) officers' tendency to respond to requests from their Military Academy classmates instead of to those most in need.⁷⁹ Much like the AFP's artillery, airpower tended to be a blunt instrument. The only difference was that the prior seemed to succeed in killing (and alienating) for more Pampangans while the kinetic airpower was inaccurate and simply wasted money, fuel and time. In one instance, Luis Taruc was believed to have been located with 120 other Huks in the vicinity of Mount Arayat in February of 1954. An AFP BCT stood by as PAF P-51s strafed the area for two hours. This resulted in one Huk KIA and none captured.⁸⁰ The light strike aircraft fleet would continue to receive significant assistance from JUSMAG while the possible benefits of mobility platforms went virtually unrealized. To be fair, the Huks simply had advantages vis-à-vis the sort of kinetic airpower that the PAF was capable of leveraging with its vintage P-51s. Luis Taruc explained:

⁷⁸ DD MDAP, Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals, report, 30 July 1953, Record Group 330, Box 94, NARA. Document is now declassified, and DD MDAP, Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals, report, 31 May 1953, Record Group 330, Box 94, Folder DD_MDAP-4, NARA. Document is now declassified.

⁷⁹ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 127.

⁸⁰ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Monthly Summary of Activities for January 1954," 10 February 1954, NARA, 2. Document is now declassified.

We were familiar with the terrain and had the advantage of light packs, and the ability to move fast, and the support of the local people... We were invariably successful in such fast, diversionary, tactical retreats... When our ruse went undetected, it could be both amusing and saddening to watch the Philippine Air Force busily bombing and strafing, or to see thousands of government troops and civil guards cordoning our campsite and saturating, with every type of gunfire, the unfortunate trees and vegetation... After a week or two of such costly but useless efforts, we would read glowing reports in the newspaper of the success of the operation. Such successes had to be claimed to justify the millions of pesos that were being wasted.⁸¹

Trends in archived data paint a picture of the limited PAF capabilities late in the conflict. Air missions were poorly tracked until 1954, but what are apparent at that time are long periods of dormancy punctuated by months of intense activity. The two months with the highest number of airstrikes, by far, were March and December. These months coincide with two of the year's biggest operations. The first spike in Figure 4.1 might be explained by the major Army offensive in the vicinity of Huk-infested Mount Arayat in March 1955. Another all-out offensive was mounted later in the year after a Huk massacre of civilians on a bus in Nueva Ecija on December 16.

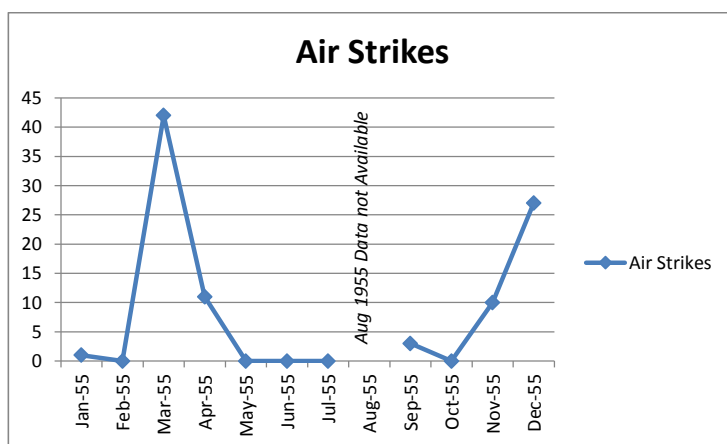


Figure 7: PAF Airstrikes, 1955

⁸¹ Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 42.

Source: Author's original work. Numerical values are based on monthly JUSMAG-Philippines mission reports located at National Archives-College Park, College Park, MD., numerous Record Groups.

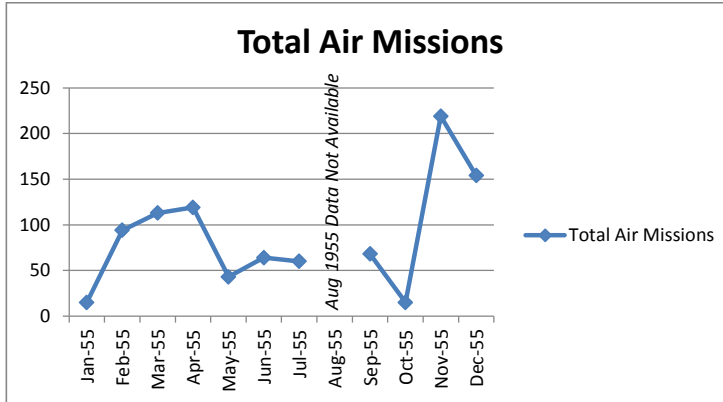


Figure 8: Cumulative PAF Air Missions, 1955

Source: Author's original work. Numerical values are based on monthly JUSMAG-Philippines mission reports located at National Archives-College Park, College Park, MD., numerous Record Groups.

The most active months for the PAF in terms of overall air operations (February, March, April, November and December) do not correlate significantly with the months marked by the highest number of land-force encounters (February, March, June and July). There is a very clear correlation, however, between air activity and weather. The Filipino rainy season lasts from May to October, coincident with the trough in Figure 4.2.

Three facts emerge from this analysis of air operations late in the anti-Huk campaign: airstrikes were strongly correlated with major operations, *overall* air missions were *not* correlated with overall ground activity, and the PAF was relatively inactive during the rainy season. This indicates two characteristics consistent with trends seen in other developing Air Forces. First, close air support as it is understood today, defined by detailed integration between air and ground maneuver and fire elements, was non-existent. Aerial fires were most likely preplanned, executed with a set distance of at least several hundred meters from friendly forces, and scheduled to precede major

ground operations. This is also supported by anecdotal accounts.⁸² Second, the PAF had not yet developed any appreciable capability to operate in marginal weather. Even if they had, air activity would have been at its nadir during the rainy season because the weather on some days would still be too inclement for any operations. Kinetic airpower was a tool of opportunity, and few opportunities arose.

Airpower became more effective following Lansdale and Magsaysay's thorough intelligence reforms. In one case, American advisors took advantage of the fact that the Huks had received arms from sympathetic Americans during the Japanese occupation and immediately following the liberation. With that in mind, an American serviceman from Clark Airbase posed as a sympathizer to infiltrate "Reco-2," the Huks' central Luzon branch. The spy informed operations officers at Basa Air Base of the location of a napping platoon of Huks. The subsequent P-51 strike took a devastating effect, to include the death of Comrade Eddie Nardo, the third-highest-ranking Huk in Central Luzon.⁸³ In the end, however, the most significant contributions of airpower likely came by way of psychological operations and other non-kinetic missions. On that topic, Lansdale gave an unusual answer in a 1972 Air University interview when asked what airpower's most important contribution to irregular warfare was. He said that he believed it was probably VIP transport.⁸⁴ Magsaysay's appearances and spot-inspections in low-cost aircraft that used little fuel were assessed to be an economically-wise employment of airpower for this limited fight.

⁸² Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 86.

⁸³ Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 97.

⁸⁴ Lansdale explained, "I felt that air power had a part in it, but I had made it very plain in my talks with the Air Staff people, and then some of the early study groups that were trying to work on these problems for the president, that I felt that a key factor in countering insurgency was to get native leaders to the right places at the right times. Thus, the main use of air power could be to give airlift to these individuals and bringing them from their desk in the capitol city out to the field, getting them to the proper places at the proper times. I felt this not only about air power, but I was also in opposition to the ground force type of weapon such as artillery—against anything that wouldn't have a personal contact with the enemy, but might easily be subject to some misuse." Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interviewed by Capt R.B. Clement, 9-10 September 1969, United States Air Force Oral History Program Interview K239.0512-220 (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Air University, 1982), 72. Interview is now declassified.

From Premier to *Pa'in*: The Surrender of Luis Taruc and the War's "End," 1954-1956

The Huks' situation was dire in 1954. Estimated Huk strength was lowered by 600 to a total of 1,570 armed fighters with limited capabilities by January of that year due to desertion and sickness.⁸⁵ At that point the number of American diplomatic, consular, and military advisory personnel in the Philippines actually exceeded the estimated number of armed insurgents. This is an extraordinary correlation of forces that distinguishes the Anti-Huk campaign from other small-scale FID missions. Yet despite their worsening odds, the hopes of some dedicated Huks were stoked by propaganda regarding the situation of global capitalism, which stressed the looming financial collapse of the United States.⁸⁶

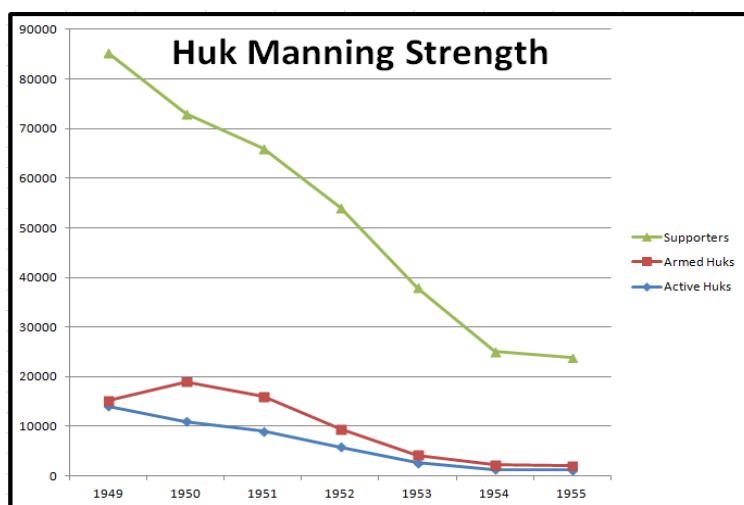


Figure 9: Declining Hukbalahap Strength, 1949-1955

Source: Author's original work. Numerical values are based on monthly JUSMAG-Philippines mission reports located at National Archives-College Park, College Park, MD., numerous Record Groups.

⁸⁵ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Monthly Summary of Activities for January 1954," 10 February 1954, NARA, 14. Document is now declassified.

⁸⁶ G-2 Division, General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, "Taruc's 'Surrender' - A Diagnosis," 26 May 1954, RG 334, Box 2, NARA, 4. Document is now declassified.

Luis Taruc surrendered in May of 1954, while the most committed of the hard-corps clung to communist propaganda. Taruc's surrender is often cited as the end of the Hukbalahap insurrection. This conclusion is ostensibly based on his leadership role and the "mass surrenders" that followed his.⁸⁷ Neither of these assertions is entirely accurate. The Huk ranks had been severely reduced prior to Taruc's surrender, but the hard-core continued to fight at an unreduced tempo for more than a year-and-a-half after that symbolic event.

The mass surrenders actually began before Taruc turned himself in. Two-hundred-and-twenty-four Huks surrendered in April 1954, several times the average number of monthly surrenders and more than quadruple the average rate following Taruc's surrender. Taruc's surrender did not trigger a significant change in the number of encounters or bloodshed. The next 18 months continued at a level of violence comparable to the year preceding the surrender. The main independent variable seemed to have been Magsaysay's "All out friendship or all out force" policy dating back to his time as the Secretary of National Defense, and his lenient treatment of surrendered Huks.⁸⁸ Huks could either surrender or fight, and with the opportunities of training in vocational skills or the EDCOR program, only the staunchest chose the latter option. This helps explain why surrenders went up and Huk membership declined, while encounters remained relatively constant for several years. Only the hard-core remained and they tended to employ small-unit tactics not for their efficacy, but because their units had become small, so to speak. Taruc's surrender was symbolically important, but was not an important independent variable affecting other surrenders or the fight's tempo.

Taruc's surrender was more of a legal and political gamble than a formal declaration of the conflict's end. The PKP and Huks had surrendered high ranking officials for pragmatic reasons before. An intercepted letter from Taruc to PKP leadership in 1950 noted, "If we are to negotiate at all... please leave me out of the picture. I have played the role of *pa'in* twice, and will only obey a 3rd

⁸⁷ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, xi.

⁸⁸ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 97.

time under irrevocable party discipline.”⁸⁹ *Pa’in* is the Filipino Tagalog word for “fish bait.” One AFP report on the event notes, “The ‘surrender’ of Taruc has ushered in a grave new problem... the understandable inability of the average man in the streets to grasp the true meaning of Taruc’s ‘surrender’.”⁹⁰ It was suspected that Taruc’s surrender would present Magsaysay with a public dilemma. On one hand, the rural poor would clamor at Magsaysay’s refusal to cooperate with their representative if he refused leniency in Taruc’s sentencing. On the other hand, leniency would allow the PKP to “have a field day” since it would seem that the government admitted the legitimacy of the Huk cause, thus granting the movement credibility.⁹¹ Taruc was given the fairly light sentence of 12 years and a \$20,000 fine in August of 1954, a deft compromise on Magsaysay’s part that seemed to do the trick.⁹²

By September of 1955, most of the HMB’s activity was political in nature. Monthly encounters trended downward slightly, but generally dealt with much smaller groups of Huks who were short on arms, ammunition, food, and morale. The last major HMB leader, Commander Tague, was killed in December of 1955. In the latter half of that month an all-out AFP offensive followed the massacre of a bus full of civilians in Nueva Ecija.⁹³ This was the last major offensive of the 1950s. Huks had been suborned to the point where the PKP could not mount organized resistance that could reasonably be expected to defeat the improved AFP. The most radical Huks did not convert, however, and remained latent for about a decade. In 1968, a splinter element of the HMB called the New People’s Army (NPA) emerged. The NPA still fights the AFP at the time of this writing, nearly a half-century later.

⁸⁹ G-2 Division, General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, “Taruc’s ‘Surrender’ – A Diagnosis,” 5.

⁹⁰ G-2 Division, General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, “Taruc’s ‘Surrender’ – A Diagnosis.”

⁹¹ G-2 Division, General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, “Taruc’s ‘Surrender’ – A Diagnosis,” 5-7.

⁹² Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Monthly Summary of Activities for August 1954,” 10 September 1954, NARA, College Park, MD. Document is now declassified.

⁹³ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Monthly Summary of Activities for December 1954,” report, 13 January 1955, RG 330, Box 46, NARA. Document is now declassified.

CHAPTER 5

A Matter of Irreducible Minimums:

An Analysis of the Anti-Hukbalahap Campaign

Strategy, in its simplest form, is a plan for attaining continuous advantage. For the goal of strategy is not to culminate events, to establish finality in the discourse between states, but to influence states' discourse in such a way that it will go forward on favorable terms. For continue it will.

—Everett Dolman
Pure Strategy

The previous chapter outlined the successes of the Anti-Hukbalahap Campaign. Despite its successes, the campaign was not the end of communist-inspired insurgency in the archipelago. From the ashes of the Huk movement grew the New Peoples' Army, an insurgency that nags at the Armed Forces of the Philippines today. Although successful in achieving American objectives, the Anti-Huk Campaign was not a decisive victory, yet it undeniably secured continuing advantage for the United States in East Asia. None of the main US objectives in the Philippines necessitated the extermination of the Huks. Nevertheless, American aims emphasized continued good relations with the former commonwealth, which precluded a Huk success in gaining political power. The prevention of a Huk victory and the importance of the geostrategic context are evidenced by the six main US interests outlined in a declassified 1952 Department of Defense report on US-Philippine relations: "Historic US-Philippine Relations; Geographic Location; UN Membership and Participation in the Korean War; The Military Bases Agreement; The Internal Security Problem; and the Condition, or lack, of ready raw materials and the underdeveloped industry."¹ One State Department official voiced American interests in the archipelago more explicitly and forcefully, "It is assumed that the United States is determined, regardless of the cost and despite any eventualities, as part of its Pacific policy, to retain the Philippines within the orbit of the democratic powers

¹ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Philippine Country Statement for Presentation of Fiscal Year 1954 MDA Program," Report, Record Group (RG) 330, Box 74, National Archives and Records Administration-College Park (NARA), College Park, MD., 10. Document is now declassified.

and to deny it to the Soviet orbit. This is the irreducible minimum of American security and interests in the Pacific and the Far East.” (emphasis in original)²

The amount of American resources committed to guarantee the security of the Philippines, given its importance, was miniscule when compared to the Korean War which was still in progress. Foreign internal defense (FID) advisors in the Philippines expressed a degree of frustration that supplies meant for their mission were often diverted elsewhere. As Edward Lansdale noted, “When I got to the Philippines finally in 1950, I was trying to see about getting supplies for unconventional operations, including loud-speakers and parachutes, and other things, and was having a hell of a time, and all of our supplies were going to Korea. I was going to the unknown or unpopular war, and it took me a long time to scrounge second-hand equipment and some condemned equipment that I promised to rehabilitate and use.”³ In the end, the mission’s lower priority probably worked in JUSMAG’s favor. Less direct oversight allowed advisors the leeway to work with still-considerable resources without the governmental and public attention that was diverted 1,600 miles north to Korea.

That this “irreducible minimum” in Pacific theater strategy was met with such a small contingent of Americans may seem unusual. The initiation of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan in 1946 and 1947 spurred widespread US security assistance efforts. Recalling the cases detailed in chapter two, the US was also assisting Greece in fighting its own insurgency during the late 1940s. The contingent of permanent party advisors for the Greek FID mission was *nearly 800 personnel* with considerably higher budgets. Numerous statesmen and generals wished to escalate the size of the US contingent in the Philippines, including adding one-to-two divisions of combat troops.⁴ These recommendations went unheeded and there was little outcry about that, save

² “Draft Paper by the Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Melby),” in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1951 vol. VI, Asia and The Pacific, part 2, ed. Fredrick Aandahl, (Washington, DC.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1492. Document is now declassified.

³ Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interviewed by Capt R.B. Clement, 9-10 September 1969, United States Air Force Oral History Program Interview K239.0512-220 (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Air University, 1982), 32. Interview is now declassified.

⁴ MAJ Andrew E. Lembke, “Lansdale, Magsaysay, America and the Philippines: A Case Study of Limited Intervention in Counterinsurgency” (master’s thesis, Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2012), 53.

from a few select members of the business community with interests in Manila and the more hawkish Defense and State Department officials. The size of the FID contingent in the Philippines was consistent with an American understanding of the insurrection. Initially US decision makers underestimated the size and popularity of the Huk movement only to become frightened of its potential by 1950. Such fear also reflected the belief that Communism was on the march in Asia as the next section suggests. Those few men with the most understanding of the “ground truth,” or reality of the limitations of insurgency in Luzon—men including Lansdale and General Leland Hobbs—were convinced that the AFP could win the fight as long as American aid and training were provided. In addition, these advisors were convinced that a successful counterinsurgency campaign by the AFP was essential to the confidence of Filipinos in the viability of their new nation. A confident, self-sufficient, and stable Philippines was critical for maintaining the archipelago as a reliable locale from which American air and naval power could be projected. The framework developed in chapter three identified these sorts of access-related concerns as issues of extrinsic value.

American Interests and the Costs Incurred to Pursue Them

Extrinsic Value

Extrinsic value was the first element in the framework for analysis of FID missions developed in chapter three, and in the case of the Philippines, extrinsic value was the first concern. Extrinsic value refers to the advantages afforded by physical access to one country for the sake of projecting power elsewhere. As the preceding section made abundantly clear, the primary American interest in the Hukbalahap Insurrection was unquestionably a matter of extrinsic value. The question is not the value of the Philippines to American interests but rather why this was so. A cynical analysis could identify imperialist motives to sap the archipelago of its own intrinsic wealth, which may have been true at some level, but this was not a driving interest behind the American response.

The historical and geographic context provides some insights into American interests and motives. Major communist insurgencies concomitantly raged in several important countries. World War Two ended only months before

the insurrection began. The Chinese had joined the Korean War during the Huk insurrection. The Philippines had been bitterly contested for its geographic importance and was already factoring into American theater strategy for conventional war in Korea, Indochina, or a feared global war with China and the Soviet Union. US military intelligence personnel saw an invasion by China as an unlikely contingency, but treated as a most dangerous possibility.⁵

The very real geostrategic concern among the highest ranking statesmen and generals is clear in 1950s American military and foreign policy reports that are now declassified.⁶ Michael Desch comments on the Philippines, “The key US bases in the Western Pacific were located in the Philippines Islands. Clark Field was a transport base, supported a Tactical Air Command (TAC) fighter wing, served as a logistics transfer point, housed an Air Force communications complex, and contained substantial Theater War Reserve Stocks. The Navy base at Subic Bay contained a ship repair facility.”⁷ It is easy to gloss over the importance of these bases without appreciating the magnitude of their relevance to America’s Asian and Pacific theater strategy. Table 5.1 attempts to capture their importance:

⁵ The threat was taken seriously enough that US advisors took steps to train AFP forces in missions important to the island’s defense from external threat in the early 1950s. As early as 1950, plans were in place to train the AFP to assist the US military in a large interstate war. This included training in anti-aircraft artillery operations and air-to-air fighter intercept. Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953,” report, 1 February 1954, Record Group 334, Box 2, NARA, College Park, MD. Document is now declassified. Intelligence reports also demonstrate that American analysts believed that China was capable of invading the Philippines, though saw this as an unlikely course of action. The 1953 Annual Report on the Philippines stated that there were “No indications of a Chinese Communist Air, Naval, or WMD attack on the Philippines.” From “Intelligence Watch Committee – Report #11,” Armed Forces of the Philippines General Headquarters, G-2, 21 July 1954, report, NARA, 2. Document is now declassified.

⁶ One report noted, “The very location of the Philippines makes them important to the United States. They occupy a key position in the offshore islands considered essential to our position in the Western Pacific. We occupy bases here and have assumed responsibility for the external defense of the islands.” From Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953,” report, RG 330, Box 46, NARA, 2.

⁷ Michael C. Desch, *When the Third World Matters: Latin America and United States Grand Strategy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 145.

Table 7: Comparison of Subic Bay and Clark Air Base to American Regional Security

Subic Bay	Clark Air Base
* World's largest naval supply depot. 2.5 Million barrels of petroleum and 1 Million tons of other supplies annually.	* Largest US Air Base in East Asia (2,900 short tons and 3,500 passengers per day)
* 8,000-10,000 7th Fleet personnel on any given day	* 18,000 employed, including 8,200 US Military
* 60% of 7th Fleet Repairs	* Most sophisticated Air Force training facility in Asia, with electronic warfare range and Crow Valley bombing range
* \$145 Million annually to Philippine economy	* \$60 Million annual to Philippine economy
* Direct and indirect employment for 37,000 Filipinos	* Main US base of support to Diego Garcia
* Skilled Filipino workers at 1/7 the pay scale	

Source: Author's original work based on values from Lawrence E. Grinter, Philippine Bases: Continuing Utility in a Changing Strategic Context National Security Affairs Monograph, Series 80-2 (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1980), 65.

Subic Bay and Clark were the premier naval and air facilities from which to extend American power and influence in East Asia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Supporting the ongoing conflict in Korea, any unforeseen contingency, and the deterrence of Chinese or Soviet aggression in the theater hinged on these bases. Subic and Clark were returned to the Philippines later in the century, but only after decades of preparing robust supply and logistics hubs and bases in Japan, South Korea, and Guam. During the time period of the Anti-Huk campaign, however, there were no immediate alternative bases for the United States in the region. Both the Huks and the Philippine Communist Party (PKP) were clear on their position to deny these strategic bases to the

United States if they were elected or attained political power through force.⁸ Communist ascension to power was a distinct possibility in the late 1940s into 1950 and would have been disastrous for American theater strategy.

JUSMAG-Philippines intelligence analysts were also genuinely concerned that subversive Chinese elements were waiting to join the insurrection, though in hindsight these concerns largely unfounded. A joint survey asserted that “The communists have been receiving instructions, advice, and aid from the Chinese mainland.”⁹ The report continued, “Certain administrative and technical advice [from China was] almost certain.”¹⁰ The claim of significant Chinese assistance beyond moral encouragement was never substantiated. Some ethnic Chinese businessmen who had been price-gouged by the Philippine government may have financially supported the Huks, but such connections are difficult to prove and unsubstantiated. Claims of “Red Chinese” in the Philippines were the product of fertile imaginations and become outlandish. For example, the 1950 MDAP survey stated that the Huks could recruit up to 89,000 members including “Local Chinese Reds and a small number of Russians.”¹¹ The authors of the report went on to suggest that local Chinese were providing financial support to the Huks without providing any evidence or proof.

Fears of Chinese influence in the archipelago, though unfounded, are understandable in hindsight and help explain American interests in the Philippines. Of an estimated 600,000 Chinese immigrants in the Philippines, only 200,000 were registered. The previously-noted MDAP survey responded that, Concerns about Chinese influence in the Philippines were not just on the

⁸ The Philippines was host to a number of other strategic American assets in addition to Subic Bay and Clark. The San Miguel Naval Air Station was the center for all 7th Fleet Communications. The regional Voice of America transmitter was operated and maintained at John Hay Air Base. Wallace Air Station housed the radar control center for the Philippine Air Defense system. The system was funded and its technicians trained by US advisors as an integrated part of anti-communist defenses in East Asia. Grinter, *Philippine Bases*, 65.

⁹ Military Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), “Military Group Joint MDAP Survey Mission to Southeast Asia,” 27 September 1950, report, RG 330, Box 74, NARA, 8. Document is now declassified.

¹⁰ Military Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), “Military Group Joint MDAP Survey Mission to Southeast Asia,” 2.

¹¹ Military Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), “Military Group Joint MDAP Survey Mission to Southeast Asia,” 2.

minds of action officers within the Departments of Defense and State but at the highest levels of American government. Such influence could provide a pretext for American involvement. For example, Allen Dulles, who served as President Dwight Eisenhower's Director of Central Intelligence, noted that when evidence came that country was vulnerable to communist revolution "... we can't wait for an engraved invitation to come and give aid."¹² Dulles also highlighted the Soviets' monumental assistance program to build the Peoples Liberation Army Air Force, insinuating that America must mount similarly-grand security assistance missions to compete globally.¹³

Intrinsic Value

One visible example of the intrinsic value of the Philippines to the United States, which influenced the size and scope of the FID mission, is in the form of favorable trade agreements. Such arrangements certainly worked to US advantage in the near term and both the PKP and Huks vowed to nullify them if they came to power. One arrangement was the Bell Trade Act of 1946. The Bell Trade Act set the economic conditions for Philippine independence in a way favorable to US business interests by establishing preferential tariffs, pegging the Philippine Peso to the US Dollar, and giving American businesses equal rights to the exploitation of natural resources in the Philippines. The conditions would taper away over time based on the agreement's conditions, but were highly advantageous to US business at the outset. Additionally, US-Philippine assistance agreements included a "buy American provision" and stipulated that the AFP was only permitted to receive military advice and equipment from the United States.¹⁴

Influential members of the American business community began pressuring Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall to focus on Philippines security by the summer of 1950.¹⁵ William Swingle, President of the Foreign

¹² Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 1998), 61.

¹³ For information on the growth of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force, reference Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Col. B. R. Nyquist, to Secretary of Defense, memorandum, 1 May 1952, RG 330, Box 74, Folder 091.3-Philippines, NARA, 1. Document is now declassified

¹⁵ Arthur B. Foye, Chairman of the Far-East American Council, Letter to Sec Def George C Marshall, July 1950, RG 330, Box 74, Folder 091.3, NARA.

Trade Council, wrote directly to Secretary Marshall in December of 1950 suggesting that any “responsible foreign business interest” demanded US intervention in The Philippines.¹⁶ Swingle and others realized that trade agreements were clearly—if unfairly—favorable to the United States. Huk leaders identified trade agreements as targets for rescinding if their party came to power, much like US access to Clark Air Base and Subic Bay.

Prestige and Ideological Value

American statesmen and Generals widely believed that losing Philippines would be a huge blow to American prestige and influence in East Asia. Public justifications for involvement in the Philippines overwhelmingly emphasized prestige-related concerns.¹⁷ One source averred, “The exploitable, strategic, and psychological advantages of the Philippine Islands are too obvious to require exposition.”¹⁸ General Graves B. Erskine, the Marine commissioned to survey the Philippines mission in 1950, felt compelled to indulge in such an exposition nevertheless:

In discussions with officials and civilians in Indochina, Malaya and Thailand I was impressed with the interest of the peoples of these countries as regards the action to be taken by the United States to insure the restoration of the internal security and independence of the Philippine Islands. This deep interest on the part of the aforementioned countries appeared to be an index of their faith and trust in the intentions of the United States as regards assistance to them in maintaining their own security and independence. In each of these countries I was impressed with the fact the United States’ actions in the Philippines would have a considerable impact throughout Southeast Asia because a failure in the Philippines on our part would undoubtedly redound to our discredit throughout Southeast Asia and be exploited to the maximum by the communists in the USSR and China. Regardless of how weak the Philippine Government may be, it is my firm belief that the United States must adopt measures that will cause

¹⁶ William Swingle, President of the National Foreign Trade Council to Maj Gen S.L. Scott, Director of the Office of Military Assistance, letter, RG 330, Box 74, Folder 091.3, NARA. Mr. Swingle also noted that “... a free Philippines, and the threat to that freedom and the security of the US by the Kremlin-led North Korean and Chinese Communist aggressions. Being convinced that such aggressions are part of a larger pattern for conquest...”

¹⁷ Justifications in classified correspondences were divided roughly equally between geostrategic and prestige-based concerns.

¹⁸ “Draft Paper by the Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Melby),” in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1951*, vol. VI, Asia and the Pacific, 1499.

internal security to be restored at the earliest possible time and to build up armed forces reasonably adequate to defend the country.

19

General Erskine's comments were made in an era of communist insurgency in the Philippines, China, Indochina, Myanmar, Indonesia, Greece, and Turkey, to name a few examples. With fears linked to the amorphous concept of prestige, it is important to ask how the human costs to America stayed so low in the Philippines.

Human Costs

Human costs to the US were comparatively miniscule during the anti-Huk campaign. The small size of the commitment reflected the will for the Philippines to shoulder its own domestic political and security burdens. The JUSMAG staff included 38 advisors in early 1950.²⁰ From 1950-1953 JUSMAG's average staff grew to 68 full-time advisors and support personnel. By 1953 nearly 20 MTTs were also deploying to the Philippines annually.²¹ Later that year, both the Army and Air Force elements of JUSMAG-Philippines noted that they were understaffed and requested seventeen more full-time advisors. The permanent JUSMAG and periodic MTT presence would then be raised to just under 100 personnel at any given time.

There is more to the size of the American mission than can be told by JUSMAG-Phil's manning records, however. In addition to the small number of military advisors, there were over 1,600 diplomatic and consular personnel established in the Philippines in 1951. One Department of State official even noted that, "Manila is becoming more and more of a regional operations center."²² Additionally, a huge contingent of American military personnel was

¹⁹ Military Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), "Military Group Joint MDAP Survey Mission to Southeast Asia," National Archives and Records Administration-College Park, College Park, MD.

²⁰ Maj Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines - 1946-1955* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 100.

²¹ DD MDAP, "Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals," report, 30 July 1953, RG 330, Box 94, NARA. Document is now declassified. Also reference DD MDAP, "Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals," report, 31 May 1953, RG 330, Box 94, Folder DD_MDAP-4, NARA. Document is now declassified.

²² "Memorandum of the Undersecretaries Meeting," Lot 53 D 250, 8 June 1951, in *FRUS*, 1951 vol. VI, Asia and The Pacific, part 2, ed. Fredrick Aandahl, (Washington DC.: US Printing Office, 1977), 1543. Document is now declassified.

still stationed on the island. Recalling a mountain-hideout meeting with two other Huk Commanders, Luis Taruc gave this instructive account in his memoirs:

We were at an elevation of 2,500 feet above sea level. On our right, we could plainly see Basa Air Base and the Philippine Air Force camp. From this base came the planes that bombed and strafed us during operations, and their air-intelligence observers. On our left, we saw Clark Air Field, then the biggest US Air Base in the Orient... The proximity of Reco-2 to these concrete reminders of the realities of the situation might well have influenced our trend of thought. They certainly were facts that could hardly be ignored.²³

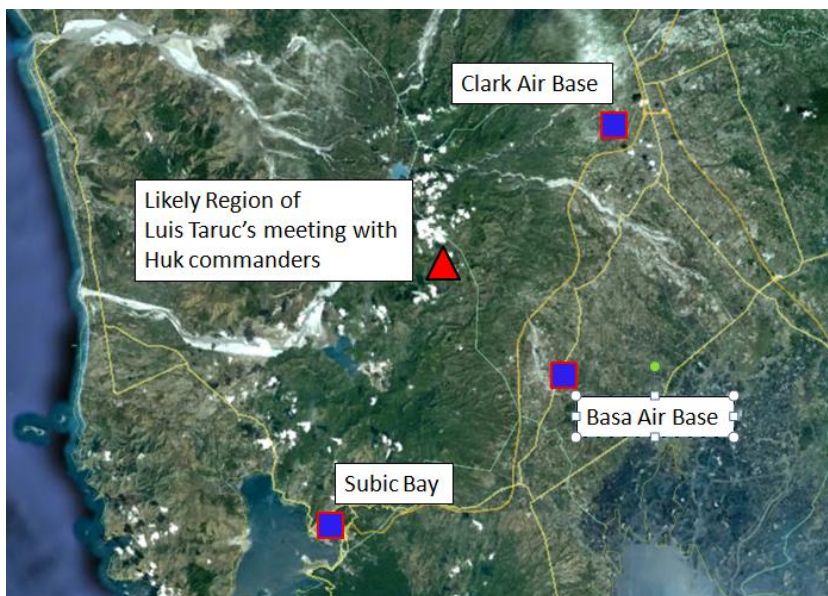


Figure 10: Large US Bases and the PAF's Basa Airbase in "Huklandia"
Source of Imagery: Google Earth, accessed February 2013.

Monetary and Material Cost

The average annual budget for the advisory mission from 1950-1955, corrected for inflation, was about \$321 million. That expense is a fraction of what was spent on the large-scale counterinsurgency efforts of Vietnam,

²³ "Reco-2" was the Huks' geographic designation for Central Luzon. Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerrilla Leader* (London: Frederick A Praeger, Inc., 1967), 80.

Afghanistan, and Iraq. Conversely, it is significantly larger than the budget for a number of modern small-scale FID campaigns, including OEF-P. Additionally, the advisory mission had access to considerable stocks of excess World War II equipment, much of it already located in the Philippine islands. As noted by Lansdale, some specialty items were hard to acquire. Nevertheless, the availability of transferable equipment in the aftermath of the largest war in history is a scenario that is unlikely to recur.

While the Philippine mission had access to considerable funding and excess equipment, it was nowhere near being the largest Security Assistance or FID mission at the time. The magnitude of the program in the Philippines was actually average among the 25 Military Direct Assistance Program missions in progress in 1952 and 1953. Missions to Denmark, Norway, Korea, Belgium, Greece, and Turkey were all considerably larger in scope and scale, particularly in the case of the last three.²⁴

The amount of aid programmed for the Philippines was used specifically for purposes of leverage during the anti-Huk campaign. Ambassador Raymond A. Spruance wrote to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "The chances of getting the necessary laws through the [Philippine] Congress to affect land reform are very poor, unless we have something to give which the Filipino politicians want badly and which we can and will withhold if we do not get our land reform legislation... The millions of dollars which the US gives to be spent by MSA [Mutual Security Act], including JUSMAG, in the Philippines is about all we have to offer in exchange for the laws we require for land reform."²⁵ Land reform laws and other legal remedies to the peasants' situation were eventually enacted, despite resistance from Presidents Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, and other Filipino elites.

²⁴ Assistance to most of these Western European allies was not FID, but rather security force assistance geared at building a militarily viable alliance of democracies after World War Two's destruction. DD MDAP, "Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals," report, 30 July 1953, and DD MDAP, "Report of MDAP Training of Foreign Nationals," report, 31 May 1953.

²⁵ "Ambassador Spruance to Secretary of State, 8 Sep 1952, No. 312 796.5 MSP/9-852" in *FRUS*, 1952-54, East Asia and the Pacific, part 2, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington DC.: USG Printing Office, 1987), 499.

Critical FID Planning Factors

Capabilities Integration

Joint operations and training during the Huk Insurrection are poorly documented, but several trends can be discerned. The formation of the BCTs seems to have integrated several complementary specialties into a formation more mobile than the Roxas-era divisions. Nevertheless, there is a lack of evidence demonstrating significant air-ground integration in AFP training. American advisors wrote-off the potential advantages afforded by of air mobility and rotary-wing operations. Lansdale attempted to create an airborne battalion, but claimed that risk-averse Army airborne advisors blocked his efforts.²⁶ The French were successfully employing helicopters in Algeria during the latter years of the Huk war, but they drew little attention in the Philippines, where they could have been very useful. The American mission paid significant attention to P-51s and the light-attack mission, however, despite marginal payoffs. Mission reports demonstrate that senior-level Air Force advisors were generally focused on flight training, and besides Lansdale, did not engage in the sort of organizational socialization necessary to affect fundamental changes to the PAF.²⁷

Organizational Socialization

Apart from the advisors noted in the previous section, permanent party JUSMAG personnel tended to focus on high-level civilian and military leadership to a degree that exceeds that demonstrated by most modern embassy staffs. Some motivated embassy personnel may contest that claim, but it is unlikely that many of today's American security assistance officers or advisors share a bedroom with partner nation (PN) Secretaries of Defense. They probably do not let the Secretary of Defense use their breakfast table as a desk. They probably do not punch the PN's Secretary of Defense in the face and then make up, as was the case with Lansdale and Magsaysay.²⁸ High-level advising was an approach championed by JUSMAG Senior Advisor General Leland Hobbs and Lansdale, who believed that the proper way to distribute advisors

²⁶ Maj Gen Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 78-79.

²⁷ Observation based on reporting in mission reports spanning from 1953-1955, multiple record groups, NARA.

²⁸ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 116-117.

throughout the PN force was to seed them at the highest level possible, but also allow them to go into the field with lower-level units.²⁹ One AFP military police officer reflected, “[Lansdale] placed more emphasis on... seeing actually what is on the ground, what people think on the ground, what is the situation on the ground, which is not revealed in the technocratic maps that adorn the offices of a military establishment.”³⁰ This imbued Lansdale with situational awareness spanning the AFP’s full hierarchy. This permitted strategic-level psychological operations agendas were linked to the tactical units’ material needs pertinent to informational techniques and procedures.

Permanent-party JUSMAG advisors focused on strategic and operational-level leaders while MTTs instructed tactics and new equipment. Lansdale was adamant about placing carefully-selected “natural advisors” in the right places within foreign military and political bureaucracies. He believed that these organizational nodes were easy to identify.³¹ Ambassador Cowen concurred, “I think an important alternative instrument is the employment of carefully-chosen personnel not merely at top advisory jobs, but also at lower levels.” Here Cowen was writing to Secretary of State Dean Acheson not only about military advisors, but government advisors in general. He went on to specifically state the need for advisors to the middle-management of the Philippine tax collecting agency.³² These sorts of arrangements were possible with the AFP based on JUSMAG’s close relationship and rapport with strategic-level decision makers. Influencing those strategic-level personnel was critical, but the following section will demonstrate that sufficient attention to junior personnel was also important.

²⁹ Ronald H. Spector, *The Early Years: Advice and Support, The US Army in Vietnam* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1983), 241, and Military Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), “Military Group Joint MDAP Survey Mission to Southeast Asia,” NARA, 8.

³⁰ Medardo Justiniano, AFP Military Police, quoted in Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 45.

³¹ Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interviewed by Major Alnwick, 25 April 1971, United States Air Force Oral History Interview K239.0512-768, Corona Harvest #0560786.

³² “Telegram from Ambassador Cowen to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, 796.5/3-2151,” in *FRUS*, 1951 vol. VI, Asia and The Pacific, part 2, ed. Fredrick Aandahl, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1520-1.

Sustainment

US advisors in the Philippines were commendably considerate of sustainment requirements, though the volume and modernity of the aid package may have created a case of dependency that persists to this day. American advisors in the Anti-Huk campaign did not fall into the trap of only training high-visibility combat specialties—such as infantry or pilots—but also trained personnel important for the sustainment of new capabilities. For example, of 271 Philippine Air Force personnel trained from Fiscal Year 1950-1953, the vast majority received training in avionics, communications, supply, and staff activities.³³ Still, advisors that have worked in the Philippines more recently may find the following observation, made in the early 1950s, rings true today: “It is expected that some assistance will be necessary for an indefinite period, especially for spare parts and maintenance items.”³⁴ The term “indefinite” still seems appropriate given the challenges the PAF faces today.

The importance of supply—an element of sustainment—became evident throughout the anti-Huk campaign. Magsaysay tackled the problem of supply pilfering. He famously used his bus-mechanic skills to dig into infantry fighting vehicles and discover that new spark-plugs had been replaced by old defective ones, and subsequently fired the supply officer.³⁵ JUSMAG’s Air Force element had discovered the importance of including supply specialists, so critical in the case of corrupt or disorganized partners, in their advisory repertoire by the end of 1952.³⁶ The AFP certainly exhibited characteristics of corruption and disorganization, but the institution also had many highly-favorable qualities that bolstered its capacity to absorb American aid.

³³ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Philippine Country Statement for Presentation of Fiscal Year 1954 MDA Program,” Air Force Annex, RG 330, Box 74, NARA, 4. Document is now declassified.

³⁴ Lt Col C. G. Hailey, Adjutant, Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, to The Director of the Office of Military Assistance, Office of the Secretary of Defense, report, 20 July 1954, Record Group 334, Box 2, Folder 470-1953, NARA, 3. Document is now declassified.

³⁵ Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 89.

³⁶ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, to Mr. George C. Roper, Special Assistant for MDAP, memorandum, 7 November 1952, NARA, 3. Document is now declassified.

Absorptive Capacity

The AFP's absorptive capacity was exceptionally high for a number of unique reasons. First, English was widely spoken after years of occupation. That can simplify FID missions in important ways. In addition to a common language, American military culture was not only familiar, but overlapping with Filipino military culture. Philippine armed forces were a part of the US military prior to independence, distinguishing this cooperative effort from almost any other case in the FID mission's history. Secretary Romulo, for example, was a Brigadier General *in the US Army*. There are important differences between beginning a new program in a country where old ties bind, and venturing into one where the lessons of cross-cultural advising have been sorted out.

American servicemen made statements about their Filipino counterparts that contrasted significantly between the early 1900s and the 1950s, demonstrating how a half-century's familiarization can change perceptions. One American soldier in the early 1900s expressed a common sentiment in a poem entitled "The Little Brown Brother:"

I'm only a common soldier in the blasted Philippines,
They say I've got brown brothers here, but I don't know what it means.
I like the word fraternity, but I still draw the line.
He may be a brother of Big Bill Taft,
But he ain't no brother of mine.³⁷

The poem went on to lament the "little brown brother's" cowardice in battle, cruelty, and disloyalty. Fifty years later, at the time of the liberation from Japan and the Huk Insurrection, the sentiment was entirely different. American military personnel could not praise their Filipino counterparts highly enough. One wrote: "The half century of American rule in the Philippines created a deep-rooted and lasting orientation of the Filipino people towards the United States which will permit us to take any course of action which takes into account the legitimate Philippine aspirations and tactfully approaches national sensitivities, insecurities, and frustrations."³⁸ Another officer commented, "The friendship of the Filipino for the United States is very real. He admires

³⁷ Robert F. Morrison, "The Little Brown Brother," in *The Manila Times*, 18 September 1903. accessed at <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83025138/1903-09-18/ed-1/seq-6/> (accessed 1 May 2013).

³⁸ "Draft Paper by the Deputy Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Melby)," in *FRUS*, 1951, 1499.

America, Americans, things American, and particularly our armed forces. With luck, hard work and some help from us the Philippines can demonstrate to Asia what freedom can mean.”³⁹ This last comment may seem gratuitous, but the fact that it could even be made contrasts the Philippines to some other PNs with whom advisors may have to work. Absorption is not merely an issue of existing organizational structures or technical acumen, but receptivity to those giving the advice.

Despite the noted cultural advantages, other factors were beyond US control. Andrew Lembke, for example, emphasizes that the brutal Japanese occupation affected Filipino culture in ways that made resistance to outside authority a source of merit.⁴⁰ The harsh rule and corruption exhibited by the Japanese made it socially acceptable for regular Filipinos to steal from and lie to figures of authority. Filipinos subjugated under Japanese rule developed a sentiment that it was noble to resist authority by various means, including corruption and violence. In one case, a Filipino soldier even murdered a US officer at a Manila supply depot when the American came to investigate the disappearance of jeeps transferred to the AFP.⁴¹

Many Americans who were familiar with the Philippines before World War II did not appreciate changed views towards authority that developed under Japanese rule. These American Foreign Service officers, businessmen and military advisors tended to spend time with the same local elites they had befriended in the interwar period, thus remaining out of touch with ordinary Filipinos. A few gifted advisors, like Lansdale, spent enough time away from elites to understand the sources of real grievances and the steps necessary to remedy them. Additionally, superficial understanding of Filipino culture unduly influenced programs that were flawed from the outset. One example was a controversial Philippine Air Force (PAF) jet program. General Robert M. Cannon replied to skeptical dissenters, “Not to grant jets would be contrary to the ‘special relationship.’ Further, ‘face saving’ and prestige are matters of serious importance to Oriental peoples. To not have jet aircraft while some of

³⁹ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, “Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953,” report, NARA, RG 334, Box #2, College Park, Maryland, 2. Document is now declassified.

⁴⁰ Lembke, “Lansdale, Magsaysay, America and the Philippines,” 6-9, 143-144.

⁴¹ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 54.

its Far East neighbors do places the Philippines in somewhat of an embarrassing international position.... It is desired to point out that it is sometimes necessary to compromise our views in order to maintain and atmosphere of close coordination and cooperation which are so essential to the successful accomplishment of our basic mission.”⁴² Saving face and prestige are very important in some cultures, and it is true that compromises must be made to sustain working relationships. Such considerations, however, should not drive solutions such as costly high-end programs unfit for PN needs based on faulty cultural interpretations of what “they” want.

The USAF cultural preference during the 1950s encouraged the development of an all-jet air force, and this influenced suggestions to equip the PAF. Simply stated, the PAF was not ready to absorb a jet capability in the 1950s. The Philippines had a long history of fighting on the land, but the rapid ascent from the ground, to propeller-driven flight, and then into the jet age was inappropriate. The PAF was having some serious difficulties adjusting to more basic military aviation requirements, particularly in the areas of aircraft maintenance and supply. One US Air Force advisor lamented in 1952 that the PAF’s C-47 and L-5 fleets were grounded because their engines were not serviceable. He noted that, “The JUSMAG Air Advisors recommended over a year ago that the Philippine Air Force take steps to alleviate the pending shortage of aircraft engines but no action was taken until the aircraft were grounded due to lack of engines. The lack of planning by the Philippine Air Force has repeatedly caused inefficiency of the organization.”⁴³ As the Huk movement began showing signs of decline in 1953, the USAF mission immediately shifted its military assistance emphasis to jet fighter aircraft, apparently inconsiderate of the issues the PAF was having with its existing fleet. The program to introduce jet-fighters to the PAF ultimately failed.⁴⁴

⁴² Maj Gen Robert M. Cannon, Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, to Assistant Secretary for Mutual Security, Headquarters USAF, “Jet Aircraft for the Philippine Air Force,” memorandum, 25 Feb 1954, NARA.

⁴³ JUSMAG-Philippines, “Monthly Report, March 1952,” NARA, 12.

⁴⁴ At the time of this writing, the PAF is one of the most experienced counterinsurgency air forces in the world; but it still has only a handful of combat-capable aircraft and has made several failed attempts, with US assistance, to transition to jet aircraft.

Final Assessments

Authors agree that US aid was necessary for the Philippines to defeat the Huk Insurrection. It would be a mistake to believe that American assistance aid, however, would *necessarily* result in success. This study has highlighted a number of the contextual characteristics that made the Huk Insurrection unique and thus ripe for small-scale FID. Success against the insurrection was not preordained, and it appeared that Huks stood a better than even chance of succeeding in late 1949 and early 1950. US military advice could have continued to overemphasize firepower, and Philippine politics might have continued to be disjointed from the masses. In that case, the Huks' already-substantial support may have grown to a point necessary to allow for the PKP's move from shady politburo meeting dens to the presidential palace at Malacañang.

US aid played a necessary role in defeating the Huk Insurrection, a point agreed upon by scholars and practitioners with widely-varied perspectives. Huk leader Luis Taruc claimed in both of his books that US assistance definitely tipped the scales in favor of the Philippine government.⁴⁵ Similarly, historians sympathetic to the Huk cause acknowledge the effectiveness of Magsaysay's agendas of land reform and military discipline.⁴⁶ These historians also concede that the Government of the Philippines needed US aid to defeat the Huks. Historian Benedict Kerkvliet, for example, noted, "Although a comprehensive assessment of the amount of support, exactly why it was given, and its degree of importance must await the day when the documents reposing in Washington and Manila archives are open to public scrutiny, the available evidence shows that this aid was extremely helpful to the Philippine government. It may have been essential."⁴⁷ Documents released since Kerkvliet wrote support conclusions about the advisory mission's effectiveness and Magsaysay's importance in waging the counterinsurgency campaign. For example, one such record is a captured Hukbalahap report that lamented US assistance to the AFP

⁴⁵ Luis Taruc, *Born of the People* (NY: International Publishers, 1953), p 251 and Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerrilla Leader* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, Inc., 1967).

⁴⁶ Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 208.

⁴⁷ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 267.

and Philippine government. The report's Huk author states, "We can be sure that for the next one or two years, there will be no opportunity to destroy Magsaysay's reputation... The reasons for this are: imperialists [US] did much and are still continuing to raise Magsaysay's reputation, *and the potential capabilities of Magsaysay* [emphasis added]... As a result of the virtues he will manifest, it is possible that the nation may willingly sacrifice a little in order to cooperate with him."⁴⁸

The Huk insurrection, like almost all insurgencies, did not end with a formal declaration or ceremony. The Huks were not defeated in detail. Instead, JUSMAG advice and significant economic and material assistance facilitated Philippine government reform. Improvements in governance combined with effective military operations reduced the Huks to a level where their relative legitimacy was dwarfed by that of the Magsaysay government. One US advisor wisely observed, "the best that can be hoped for is a situation of disorder limited to acts of banditry."⁴⁹ There were two stated reasons for such restrained hopes. First, locating every hard-core communist was impossible. Second, as one JUSMAG report declared, "... it had always been this way in the Philippines"—a state of perpetual resistance.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, "Annual Report, 1 January – 31 December 1953," report, RG 334, Box 2, NARA, 29.

⁴⁹ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, to Commander in Chief, US Forces in the Pacific, report, *Communist Propaganda in the Philippines*, 8 July 1954, Record Group 334, Box 2, NARA, 2-4. Document is now declassified.

⁵⁰ Joint US Military Advisory Group-Philippines, to Commander in Chief, US Forces in the Pacific, report, *Communist Propaganda in the Philippines*, NARA.

CHAPTER 6

Where Vultures Flocked:

Resistance, Reform, and Assistance in El Salvador's Civil War, 1980-1992

Don't you think one Vietnam is enough?

—Senator Daniel Inouye, Hawaii

Journal of Defense & Diplomacy: *There is a pervasive feeling of pessimism in Washington and in El Salvador about the probable outcome of the conflict. What are your feelings about the likely end? Can anything be done?*

Major General (Retired) Edward Lansdale: *Because of the myriad failures of communism throughout the world, I have no doubt we can win El Salvador.*

—Interview in *Journal of Defense & Diplomacy*, July 1983

El Salvador surely was among the nation-states in the latter half of the twentieth century that deserved a revolution.

—Todd Greentree

Crossroads of Intervention

The El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) fielded only 10,000 poorly-trained troops and 7,000 paramilitary police at the outset of American foreign internal defense (FID) mission in the early 1980s. ESAF ranks would go through an astounding growth to 70,000 with US assistance. Meanwhile, the communist *Farabundo Martí Liberation Front* (FMLN) would be reduced from 14,000 at its peak in the early 1980s to 7,000 by the decade's end.¹ A historiography of the Salvadoran Civil War demonstrates that authors from a wide variety of perspectives concur that US support was essential to change in the correlation of forces and prevention of an FMLN victory.² The FID mission played a similar role to the anti-Hukbalahap campaign in this way.

¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 95.

² Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr. in *Che Guevara: Guerrilla Warfare*, 3rd Ed. (New York: SR Books, 1997), 404.

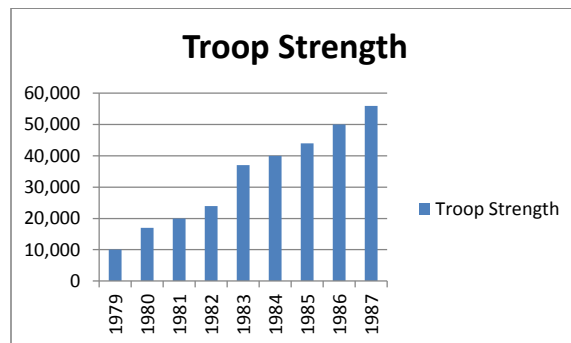


Figure 11: ESAF Troop Strength, 1979-1987

Source: Author's original work. Values from Andrew J. Bacevich, et al., American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis Report (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988).

These numbers, however, obscure the significant challenges faced by advisors in the US Embassy's Military Group (MILGROUP). The coffee plantations and craggy volcanic gorges of El Salvador would present American advisors with a much more difficult row to hoe than Central Luzon in the 1950s. Political sensitivities and international support for the FMLN would bedevil the effort at every turn. Both the ESAF and the FMLN committed egregious violations of human rights. The government and right-wing death squads committed some of the worst abuses during the war's early years, making US assistance particularly controversial. Controversies would shape and limit the size and scope of the FID engagement. A political compromise was struck in the United States between non-intervention and a more assertive counterinsurgency approach featuring a significant US presence.

This chapter will first review 20th century Salvadoran history to highlight the unique relationship between landed elites, politicians, the military, and the peasantry that contributed to the insurgency. Next, US involvement in the civil war will be divided into three phases. The first phase begins with the fall of Nicaragua to the communist Sandinistas in 1979 and spans until the transfer between the administrations of President Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan in January 1981. Next, the period from 1981 to 1984 will be examined, demonstrating a dire situation for the Salvadoran government and American advisors, which was gradually surmounted with US assistance. A third period

of stalemate will be examined that spanned from 1985 until the signing of a peace treaty in Mexico City in 1992. This analysis will clearly demonstrate that the Salvadoran case highlights both the potential and limitations of using security assistance as leverage to reform foreign militaries.

A History of Violence: El Salvador in the 20th Century

Former US MILGROUP Commander Colonel John Waghelstein explained, “You can’t look at El Salvador unless you understand the *Matanza*. You can’t look at El Salvador unless you understand the impact of the Soccer War. You can’t look at El Salvador unless you understand population pressures, land distribution, and the pre-revolutionary situation...”³ This sub-section will briefly attempt to explain these three important themes and establish a foundation for understanding the El Salvador’s Civil War.

Farabundo Martí, the namesake for the FMLN, was born a peasant and eventually earned a degree in political science from the University of El Salvador. He was an outspoken peasant-rights activist throughout the 1920s, and was eventually exiled where he colluded with other communists in Guatemala, Mexico and New York. Martí had fought alongside Augusto Sandino in Nicaragua, further bolstering his leftist credentials. Both men met similar fates, and achieved martyrdom, in the name of anti-imperialism.⁴

Martí’s martyrdom came in February 1932 in an event burned into the Salvadoran national psyche, simply known as *La Matanza*, which roughly translates to “the slaughter.” After a drop in worldwide coffee prices, Martí attempted to organize a peasant revolt against President Maximiliano Hernández Martínez. An ardent fascist and eccentric, Martínez’s belief in the occult inspired him to hang colored lights from streetlamps in San Salvador to prevent small pox. As president he also professed that it was worse to kill ants than to kill humans, because while the latter could be reincarnated, ants would stay dead forever. In reaction to Martí’s revolt, approximately 30,000 peasants were massacred like ants. The massacre left a small number of wealthy landowning oligarchs who were indebted and intertwined with a corrupt and

³ Colonel John D. Waghelstein quoted in Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 242.

⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 75.

oppressive Army. Army leaders, satisfied with their performance during *La Matanza*, earned their institution special status of legal exception in Salvadoran society. El Salvador evolved into what one historian has referred to as the “Protection Racket State.”⁵

The eccentric ruler fell from power in 1944 amidst mass protest when he reneged on promises to honor the constitution and attempted to assume office for a fourth term. Subsequent decades saw a cycle where self-proclaimed reformist regimes overpromised and under delivered, leading to peasant unrest followed by military coup. Meanwhile, Cuba’s communist revolution sparked fears in the minds of American statesmen that similar events could transpire in other Latin American countries. The administration of President John F. Kennedy orchestrated a “stabilizing coup” in El Salvador in reaction to that fear. This coup was led by Colonel Julio Adalberto Rivera and a clique of his classmates, who installed a combined civil-military junta. President Kennedy would declare that, “Governments of the civil-military type of El Salvador are the most effective in containing communist penetration in Latin America.”⁶

Central American countries had more than just that sort of internal strife to worry about, as evidenced in the conflict which took place in July 1969 known popularly as the “Soccer War.” This short conflict pitted El Salvador against Honduras in a 100-hour conventional war. Honduras had long taken issue with immigrants from El Salvador taking land from native Hondurans, and enacted laws in 1969 to displace Salvadorans. Fears of a refugee crisis rose in El Salvador and enflamed nationalist sentiments between the two states. The event erupted during violent rioting between Salvadoran and Honduran fans at the North American qualifying round for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) 1970 World Cup. The war began on 14 July with an attack by Salvadoran Air Force (FAS) bombers, which were actually modified civilian transport planes with munitions hastily fastened to the wings. The bombing was followed by an invasion by the El Salvadoran Army which made significant advances into Honduras and nearly reached the capital, Tegucigalpa. El Salvador eventually withdrew its forces after negotiations, but

⁵ William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996).

⁶ Loveman and Davies, *Che Guevara*, 394.

the ESAF saw its performance as a victory and thus vindication for its favored tactics, techniques, and procedures. Such vindication and self-confidence would influence the El Salvadoran approach to the irregular war of the 1980s, and color ESAF's acceptance of counsel from US military advisors representing a country that had just lost to Vietnamese insurgents.⁷

Proud and intertwined with the oligarchic elites, the ESAF dominated El Salvador in the 1970s. General Humberto Romero won the second of two ESAF-rigged elections in 1977. Romero had strong personal ties to the country's elite landowners, with whom he shared a love of horses and all things equestrian. Increasing dissatisfaction with the country's sorry economic condition led to increased opposition and protest and Romero eventually outlawed opposition of any sort. Paramilitary organizations with ties to the ESAF began using draconian means to eliminate anyone suspected of upsetting the status quo. One of the most notorious was ORDEN, Spanish for "order," which had origins in the 1960s and colluded with the National Guard in the countryside. Other right-wing "death squads" boasted names such as the General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Brigade, named after the president who oversaw *La Matanza*.⁸

Leftist organizations sought to consolidate and arm in reaction to this growth of the right-wing death squads and the state's repressive security organizations. The clandestine Salvadoran Communist Party birthed a more aggressive splinter organization known as the Popular Liberation Front (FPL) in 1970, one of several leftist organizations in El Salvador at that time. The rigged elections of 1972 and 1977 further delegitimized the government and drove more aggrieved peasants into the arms of the revolutionaries. Disparate leftist groups drawing their inspiration from varying interpretations of socialism realized that the only way to fight the repressive Salvadoran state was to unify. Their collusion led to the establishment of the FMLN in 1980.

⁷ "Entry: Soccer War," *Encyclopedia Britannica* online edition, available online at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/550878/Soccer-War>. (Accessed 12 May 2013).

⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 77-78.

FMLN: Organization, Activity and International Support

Five distinct groups merged to form the FMLN in 1980 (Reference Table 6.1).⁹ The FMLN's peak strength was approximately 14,000 armed fighters. The insurgents utilized weapons smuggled from a variety of communist allies abroad, mostly through neighboring Nicaragua and Honduras. FMLN personnel pursued civic action programs in addition to armed fighting, but emphasis on the latter was made apparent by the insurgents' battalion-sized operations of the early 1980s. Large operations characterized the first three years of the war, when the FMLN held the initiative during the conflict.¹⁰ One of the key ingredients to these successes was the FMLN's adeptness at sabotage, particularly in the use of explosives to destroy government infrastructure.

Table 8: Groups Comprising the FMLN

Group	Full Name in English	Leader Early in War	Description
FPL	Popular Liberation Forces	Cavetanio Carpio	Largest FMLN faction. Dedicated to prolonged struggle. Primarily in Chalatenango and Cabañas.
ERP	People's Revolutionary Army	Joaquin Villalobos	Young communists disillusioned with politics after 1972 election. Became most powerful faction.
FARN	Armed Forces of National Resistance	Ernesto Jovel	Splintered from ERP after disagreement. Known for kidnapping and being most likely to negotiate.
PRTC	Central American Workers' Revolutionary Party	Unknown	Focused on region-wide revolution. Also splintered from ERP. Smallest FMLN faction.
FAL	Armed Forces of Liberation	Shafik Handal	Armed movement formed by Communist Party in 1980 to avoid being left behind. FMLN conduit to Soviet Union. ¹¹

Source: Author's original work.

⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 85.

¹⁰ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 331.

¹¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 86.

The most popular recruiting grounds for revolutionary FMLN membership were labor unions, colleges, and the Catholic Church. Colleges were especially important to the rural-based FMLN as an important source of urban intelligence and operatives.¹² Some members of the Church combined Catholic liberation theology with left-leaning politics. This combination of beliefs made priests and nuns targets for the death squads, even if they did not materially aid the FMLN. The deliberate targeting of nuns and priests added an element of moral complexity and hazard to the FID mission, which was complicated further by sensational press coverage of the murder of Archbishop Óscar Romero as well as a number of American nuns.¹³

While the FMLN's strength grew by recruiting from within El Salvador, its shortcomings in armaments had to be remedied from without. Initial weaknesses in armaments were similar to those of the Huks but they were eventually surmounted. Weapons of the FMLN were limited to small-arms, mortars, and some .50-caliber machine guns early in the conflict.¹⁴ Other arms would be available over a period of several years as the FMLN courted and received external support from communist regimes. Salvadoran Communist Party leader Shafik Handal, for example, made a jet-setting journey to secure weapons for the struggle in 1980. Handal's trip took him to Cuba, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ethiopia. The fruits of his trip included a cornucopia of modern small-arms and heavier, crew-served weapons. Most of these weapons were from American and Western European manufacturers and obtained through third-party sources for the sake of deniability on the part of communist suppliers.¹⁵ In fact, FMLN armaments and capabilities soon outclassed the ESAF's in some categories.¹⁶

¹² Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 156.

¹³ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 87.

¹⁴ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 331.

¹⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 89. Also see José Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995.

¹⁶ The FMLN's 120mm mortars provided much more effective at penetrating steep, narrow ravines and volcanic terrain than the ESAF, which had virtually no mortar support. Reference Colonel Joseph S. Stringham III (Commander, Military Group, El Salvador, 1982-1983), interviewed by Colonel Charles A. Carlton, 28 May 1985, US

Smuggling weapons and ammunition through Guatemala, Honduras, and Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua made resupplying easier for the FMLN than it had been for the Huks. The ease of insurgent resupply is a testament to the difficulties of guarding a rugged border, even in a very small country. Arms came into El Salvador not only through the rough terrain, but above it as well. Captured FMLN leaders detailed how important air routes into austere airfields were for their own resupply.¹⁷ The ESAF's own aviation capability would be threatened when some more advanced weapons were integrated into the FMLN's inventory. For example, Soviet SA-7 man-portable surface-to-air missiles were acquired sometime in 1989, significantly increasing the threat to FAS aircrews.¹⁸ Despite the FMLN's smuggling successes, the ESAF was effective at interdicting food coming to the FMLN from groups in Honduras. The ESAF was also among the first militaries to use successfully remotely piloted vehicles for border-surveillance.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the tide of incoming weapons and supplies could not be stopped.²⁰

The majority of the weapons smuggled to FMLN fighters were transported over land through the borders with Honduras and Guatemala and from Nicaragua through the Gulf of Fonseca. The Salvadoran Navy was incapable of brown-water operations and unable to interdict supplies entering El Salvador over water. The credibility of the Salvadoran Navy was further reduced in the early 1980s by the infamous Salvadoran Shrimp Scandal, an extortion campaign in the Gulf of Fonseca. The scandal involved Salvadoran Navy sailors, out of uniform, committing piracy by robbing shrimp boats. The Navy would then promise protection to individual shrimp boat captains—for a

Army War College/US Army Military History Institute Senior Officer Oral History Program, Carlisle Barracks, PA., 25.

¹⁷ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 332.

¹⁸ José Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 149, and Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 341.

¹⁹ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles A. Carlton, 62.

²⁰ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas*, 182.

percentage of their profits—thus extending the “protection racket state” onto the open waters.²¹



Figure 12: El Salvador

Source: Joe Andrade, “El Salvador: One Soldier’s Perspective”, Presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012.

The growth in capabilities of the FMLN, as well as the unprofessional and criminal behavior of elements of the ESAF, started to turn the tide in favor of the former. In addition, the FMLN received a major boost in support, both moral and material, when the Sandinistas came to power in neighboring Nicaragua. The revolutionary group’s motto became, “If Nicaragua was victorious, so too will be El Salvador.”²² By 1980, the FMLN was receiving a steady stream of arms from communist supporters abroad. Additionally, the FMLN was reportedly emboldened by Carter’s decision to withdraw aid to El Salvador over human rights concerns in 1980.²³ Once US aid was reinstated

²¹ Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, US Defense Attaché to El Salvador (1983-1985) quoted in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 343.

²² Loveman and Davies, *Che Guevara: Guerrilla Warfare*, 401.

²³ One ESAF officer opined, “President Carter, who revoked all military aid to us, who gave Nicaragua away, who gave Rhodesia away, who practically gave Angola and

and began to take effect, the FMLN blatantly adopted a strategy based on lessons-learned from a nation which had recently defeated the United States: North Vietnam. The strategy included using propaganda to erode domestic support in a manner that surged leading up to elections in the US Congress, making Capitol Hill one of the war's true strategic battlegrounds.²⁴

Tortured Policies and Peoples, 1979-1981

Another cycle in El Salvador's political history started on 15 October 1979 when a reformist group of young military officers known as the *Juventud Militar* overthrew Salvadoran President, General Romero. The *Juventud Militar* installed a combined military-civilian junta which included some left-leaning politicians. The junta moved to reform banking, export policies, and land ownership. As part of land ownership reform the newly-installed junta seized several large estates from the once-powerful oligarchs. Many of the oligarchs fled the country and supported the death squads financially from abroad, most notably from south Florida. Despite the external support for extremists on both sides, the *Juventud Militar* made prospects for a moderate El Salvador look promising a short period of time. Yet despite the junta's claim to power, many powerful cliques within the military simply refused to swear allegiance to it. One ESAF officer summarized the sentiment within the Army by explaining that, "Colonel Garcia is the man from whom we take orders, not the junta. We have been running the country for fifty years, and we are quite prepared to keep on running it."²⁵

Domestic political unease would continue through three subsequent juntas that ruled the country from 1979 until 1982. Initially in 1979, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America and the Caribbean traveled to El Salvador to suggest that interim President Arturo Romero hold elections. His trip was intended to counter the insurgent's ability to exploit perceptions of

Mozambique away was forced to initiate an aid program for us because he felt the danger of a Marxist revolution in El Salvador." Colonel Carlos Reynaldo Lopez Nuila, Vice-Minister of Public Security, Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 74.

²⁴ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas*, 35, and Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 412.

²⁵ José Guillermo Garcia was the Salvadoran Minister of Defense from 1979-1984. Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 494. National Guard leader Colonel Vides Casanova quoted in Saul Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 83.

government corruption. Romero refused, and was deposed by a group of moderate and liberal ESAF officers who installed a new junta. None of the three civil-military juntas was able to maintain power and enact reform sufficiently enough to prevent a revolution.

The Government of El Salvador (GOES) and ESAF remained highly-divided during this tumultuous period. Powerful right-wing elements within each refused to accept reforms. Political killings rose to approximately 2,000 per month when the junta was less than a year old, a rate commensurate with “pre-Surge” Iraq.²⁶ Óscar Romero, beloved Archbishop of San Salvador, was killed by death squads after boldly speaking out against their torture and executions in his popular radio addresses. The Archbishop was assassinated in March of 1980 and several leaders of a peaceful opposition movement were also tortured and executed by right-wing death squads. The death squads’ approach to counterterrorism is summarized by the notes that began to appear on disfigured corpses of suspected FMLN personnel in December of 1980. One such note reportedly read, “Merry Christmas, people. We are ridding you of terrorists.”²⁷ From this point forward, political compromise became even less likely, and leftist groups began adopting similarly gruesome practices.

The earliest American advisors to the ESAF would see the gruesome reality of these death-squad problems for themselves. The dry lava field outside of San Salvador and Puerto de Diablo were two favorite dumping grounds of paramilitary groups. The killing fields became littered with carrion, bones, and the mutilated corpses of political opponents and suspected communist sympathizers. MILGROUP personnel and reporters alike could purportedly follow the buzzards to find each day’s new victims.²⁸

American concerns over a communist takeover initially conflicted with disquiet about these human rights violations. Individuals within the Carter Administration anguished about resuming aid to El Salvador, but did so in late 1980, sending 300 ESAF officers to human rights training and promising

²⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 79, and David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 268-269.

²⁷ Cayetano Carpio, FPL Commander, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 39.

²⁸ Paul P. Cale, “The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992,” report (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 6.

trucks, radios and helicopters at a later date.²⁹ ESAF officers came to believe that US aid indicated that their continued rule was a vital US interest in the eyes of American statesmen.³⁰ Therefore, security assistance was initially not an effective lever to promote reform in an increasingly bloody conflict. The reason assistance did not lead to reform was that ESAF leadership did not seriously believe that aid would be permanently denied. Archbishop Romero had begged President Carter to suspend military aid because it would enhance the military's repression of the people. Journalist Saul Landau suggested, "The Archbishop was correct. The aid process began and the repression grew worse."³¹ In fact, this is untrue. The political violence was at its peak from late 1980 to early 1981, before aid had been significantly increased. Nonetheless, some US-trained units committed serious human rights violations, making justification for more robust intervention problematic throughout the conflict.

The direction of American foreign policy in the wake of Vietnam created an unfavorable environment for intervening in small countries with internal security problems. In 1975, the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, more popularly known as "the Church Committee" in honor of its chair, Senator Frank Church, increased intelligence oversight and gutted the CIA's human intelligence capabilities in the wake of evidence of gross abuse and overreach. The Carter Administration's increased emphasis on human rights resulted in greater stipulations for foreign governments wishing to accept American military assistance. Reacting to this, El Salvador had refused US aid along with Guatemala and Brazil in 1977. As noted, aid was resumed again by Carter in late 1980, but not without some staunch resistance, most notably from the US Ambassador to El Salvador.³²

The earliest opponent of assisting the ESAF was US Ambassador to El Salvador from 1980-1981, Robert E. White. White believed that a revolution of some sort was inevitable in El Salvador, and Nicaragua's lesson should have been to, "... go along with it and retain as much influence and communication

²⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 83.

³⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 84.

³¹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 85.

³² Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 74-75.

with the new leadership as we could.”³³ In one instance White was out of El Salvador in 1980 on business and his substitute thwarted an ESAF coup by promising some significant military aid. White’s substitute, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs James Cheek, orchestrated a shining example of security assistance used as leverage. Nonetheless, White was furious and still adamantly opposed to any military assistance, opining that the US, “Didn’t owe the ESAF anything for not overthrowing their own government.”³⁴

Democrats in the US Congress argued against aid as well and emphasized that El Salvador would inevitably become “another Vietnam.” Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman, Clarence “Doc” Long of Maryland, expressed, “I wish to God Presidents would read a few books. If Johnson had read some, we wouldn’t have been in Vietnam. If Reagan would read some, we wouldn’t be here now.”³⁵ Fortunately, some military advisors had read books, though not the same ones as Senator Long.³⁶ Advisors were put into a difficult position between non-intervention and over-commitment. Fortunately, as subsequent sections will show, these advisors had the knowledge and ability to deftly steer the mission toward the achievement of American objectives.

Ambassador White continued to oppose any ties to the ESAF, but military planners would gradually chip away at his authority. First, the US military provided a three-week human rights course for ESAF officers in Panama. Next, in October 1980, a team of logistics advisors deployed to conduct training with the ESAF. The following month, a small team would help organize a counterinsurgency operation called GOLDEN HARVEST to protect the coming coffee crop.³⁷ Robert White would finally be removed from the role of Ambassador on 1 February 1981, and with him, the most substantial source of opposition to greater engagement with the E

³³ General Wallace H. Nutting, quoted in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 71.

³⁴ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 44-45.

³⁵ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 96.

³⁶ Ironically, Senator Long would oversee the expansion of the largest and most expansive covert action in US history, sanctioned by an orthodox Republican congressman from Texas. See George Crile, *Charlie Wilson’s War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

³⁷ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 45.

From Near-Death to Near Peer:

The ESAF Evolves to Match the FMLN, 1981-1984

January 1981 marked a turning point in US assistance efforts for three main reasons. These reasons included the following: the Carter Administration's resumption of military and economic aid during his last week in office; the inauguration of the Reagan Administration which favored intervention; and the FMLN's execution of a massive offensive on 10 January. Observing the dire events of late 1980 and early 1981, President Carter hurriedly boosted aid on 14 January and deployed three mobile training teams (MTTs) to El Salvador to channel assistance to the ESAF.³⁸ But Carter's effort would be grossly insufficient considering the events that shortly followed in the week leading up to Reagan's inauguration in January 1981.

Some American statesmen still did not believe that the ESAF needed military aid in late 1980, but a massive FMLN offensive beginning on 10 January 1981 would change their perception.³⁹ The FMLN launched what it called the "Final Offensive" with ten days left in Carter's term. The strategy behind the offensive was based on three lines of operation. First, military targets throughout the country were to come under heavy attack by the guerrillas, which had more than 10,000 active fighters by that time. In the midst of the attack, sympathetic ESAF officers were to excite mass defections. They were to inspire the military's mainly-peasant force of enlisted conscripts to side with the few officers who did not completely denigrate them. Finally, mass uprisings were to be encouraged in "liberated" urban areas.

The "final" offensive was anything but; still, it demonstrated some previously-unseen FMLN strengths. Despite attacking more than 500 targets in 82 cities and villages, the FMLN was unable to seize a single installation from the ESAF. Urban unrest never materialized in the way that the FMLN had hoped. ESAF intelligence also knew about the plan well in advance. Only two officers tried to convince their men to rebel, but their rallying cries went unheeded. Those two captains fled into the countryside and were embraced as

³⁸ MAJ Jeremy L. Simmons and CPT Steven P. Basilici, "Transformation: A Bold Case for Unconventional Warfare" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2004), 95.

³⁹ General Wallace H. Nutting, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 72.

heroes by the FMLN.⁴⁰ The offensive's three-part strategy was clearly overly ambitious, but the unfolding fight demonstrated an FMLN strength that was far superior to earlier estimates.

Reagan took office as the offensive was in progress and his administration would significantly elevate assistance to El Salvador. Ambassador White was dismissed in February of 1981 after opposing the Reagan's new policy on El Salvador. The US increased sales and funding to the ESAF in 1981. This notable increase from the logistics and human-rights focused training during the Carter years also included significant grants of combat equipment.

Significant infusions of aid and funding were needed to reform a military that was in dismal shape in 1981. The ESAF was predominantly trained for conventional war with Honduras after lingering memories of the Soccer War and had no counterinsurgency training or doctrine.⁴¹ During the first half of 1981, 1,200 soldiers—12 percent of the Army—were killed in fighting with the FMLN.⁴² Advisors described the ESAF of the early 1980s as a “9-to-5 Force,” noting that every August its personnel took a summer vacation, with almost complete disregard for the security situation.⁴³ That cavalier attitude on the part of ESAF officers would have to change based on the FMLN's newly-exhibited strength, as would the ESAF's poor counterinsurgency tactics. Much like the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the ESAF conducted large, ineffective sweeps (“search and destroy operations”). The clumsy maneuvers were easily avoidable for the FMLN, which operated at night virtually uncontested, as had the Hukbalahap.⁴⁴ The Salvadoran Air Force (FAS) possessed a fleet poorly maintained aircraft capable only of operating during daylight.⁴⁵ The SAF developed a system of air support based on cronyism, where pilots provided

⁴⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 91-92.

⁴¹ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 330.

⁴² LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 135.

⁴³ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 135, and Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 55.

⁴⁴ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 332.

⁴⁵ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 334.

support to favored academy classmates, much like the Philippine Air Force had during the early days of the anti-Huk campaign detailed in chapter four.⁴⁶

Providing air support to favored cronies was indicative of a deeper problem within the ESAF. A corrupt and preferential officer promotion regime, based on the ESAF's *tanda* system, ensured promotion for even the most mediocre and corrupt officers. A *tanda*, or a graduating academy class, was all promoted at the same time, regardless of individual performance. Senior officers saw high posts as their due for time in service, and many poor officers earned high rank without meritorious conduct or performance.⁴⁷ While US aid and training could rapidly expand the ESAF's numbers, reforming its leadership would be a significantly more difficult problem. US advisors would never be able to solve the problem of the *tanda* system.

The 55: Politics and FID in El Salvador and America, 1981-1984

Moderate elements from both El Salvador's Christian Democratic Party and the FMLN proposed a negotiated settlement in 1981 but it was not seriously entertained. It would be counterfactual to suggest that a negotiated settlement was even possible in the war's earliest years. It is clear, however, that hardline elements within the GoES, FMLN, and US government saw little utility in negotiations. Reagan and Secretary of State Alexander Haig were still of the belief that the conflict was a war, framed in the context of competition with the Soviet Union with high stakes, and therefore had to be "won."⁴⁸ Early Reagan Administration officials did not see bank-reform or land-reform as acceptable options. They initially alienated potential allies within GoES who were in favor of those necessary reforms. President Duarte recalled one meeting with Reagan advisors Richard Allen, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Constantine Menges: "Their attitudes ranged from skeptical to rude as they interrogated me. They seemed to have been coached by the Salvadoran right... They questioned me about agrarian reform, as if only a communist would ever advocate such a

⁴⁶ Andrew J. Bacevich, et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis Report (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 31.

⁴⁷ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 330.

⁴⁸ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 563.

plan. Allen, in particular, kept asking me about whether I admired Fidel Castro.”⁴⁹

American officials in country also believed that there was no alternative to the outright defeat of the FMLN. One of the most vociferous was the US Defense Attaché, Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, who went on record suggesting, “... to say that [the ESAF] has the initiative implies that you have a campaign plan that sees you through to a successful insurgency termination, which I define as victory. I don’t accept negotiated solutions as even being a possible solution.”⁵⁰ Duryea also asserted that while democratic people thought of negotiating on a good-faith basis, that “Communists everywhere in the world, on the other hand, look at negotiating, dialogue, bargaining, treaties or whatever as merely one more step in the political process to ultimate control.”⁵¹ He would further assert that negotiating with insurgents breaks the social contract that a democratic government has with its people.⁵² Duryea’s sentiment was shared by many Salvadoran officers early in the war. Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa Pérez, for example, expressed the prevailing opinion within ESAF: “We are involved in a war and somebody has to win. I’ve never heard of a war that was a draw.”⁵³ It was only a matter of years before ESAF leadership, along with the FMLN, would hear of such a war, but only after a dozen years of strife. Absolutist perspectives on the conflict’s outcome would only become watered down by political compromise, both in the Salvadoran and American capitols.

The Reagan Administration wrestled with a Democrat-controlled Congress over El Salvador policy at a time when Vietnam’s ghosts still haunted the US capitol. Some observers drew inevitable parallels between El Salvador and Vietnam, noting that the latter had started as a small advisory mission but cascaded into a massive and ultimately unsuccessful intervention beset by

⁴⁹ President José Napoleón Duarte, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 99-100.

⁵⁰ Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, US Defense Attaché to El Salvador, 1983-1985 in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 345.

⁵¹ Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, US Defense Attaché to El Salvador, 1983-1985 in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 377-378.

⁵² Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, US Defense Attaché to El Salvador, 1983-1985 in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 378.

⁵³ Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Rand Corporation Report R4042 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1991), 69.

moral ambiguities. Memories of the war in Southeast Asia would indelibly shape the form that intervention in El Salvador would take. Analogies to Vietnam were ill-founded, but their persistence in tandem with the military's fixation on a larger conventional war with the Soviet Union led to intervention in a compromised and accidentally-small form. The compromised mode of engagement, despite the arbitrariness of its design, would ultimately provide a recipe for success. That counterintuitive point is reminiscent of Lansdale's frustrations with equipment procurement in the anti-Huk campaign, which was also ironically strengthened when attention was diverted toward Korea.

Individual statesmen and soldiers drew different lessons from Vietnam and the other limited wars of the preceding decades, particularly regarding escalation of conflict. The mission in El Salvador would eventually take on some of the more successful counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam, but some statesmen desired more rapid escalation. The most notable was Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who believed that the lessons of Vietnam and Korea were to go after an enemy's logistical sources early and with overwhelming force. He identified Cuba and the Soviet Union as the FMLN's logistical sources, but never specifically identified how to go after them, besides renewing covert attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro.⁵⁴ The interagency task force he formed to create a course of action for a Castro overthrow concluded that it was inadvisable. Haig blasted back that, "This is just trash: Limp-wristed, traditional cookie-pushing bullshit!"⁵⁵ White House Chief of Staff James Baker averred that, "If we give Al Haig his way, the next thing you know, we'll be carpet-bombing Latin America."⁵⁶

The White House national security staff was divided between Haig's interventionism and more measured voices, as were members of Congress. More than 30 congressional delegations traveled to El Salvador in a six-month period from 1982 to 1983. Congressmen and their entourages sometimes came

⁵⁴ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 83.

⁵⁵ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 83.

⁵⁶ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 83.

on fact-finding missions with open minds. At other times delegations sought first-hand evidence to bolster their own preconceived conclusions.⁵⁷

The delegations tended to focus on issues concerning the ESAF's human rights abuses and the imperative for reform in that area became starkly clear in late 1981. Murders by death squads linked to right-wing elements in the ESAF and National Guard had reached epidemic proportions. The Atlacatl Rapid Reaction Battalion, which had received American equipment and training, conducted what has since been called the El Mozote Massacre. The event was marked by the torture and execution of 767 men, women, and children. The village of Mozote had been known to support the FMLN, but there was no clear reasoning or military intelligence driving the gratuitous violence that occurred there.⁵⁸ American politicians on both sides of the debate would either downplay or emphasize the event in accordance with the strength of their own ideological position. Aside from the issue's politics, advisors recognized the clear need for reform in the ESAF, which in 1981 was unfit to conduct counterinsurgency in a way that would lend to a lasting peace.

The ESAF appeared to be on the verge of defeat in 1981 and the need for strategic adjustments to their counterinsurgency campaign was apparent. Brigadier General Fred Woerner—an acknowledged Latin America expert—was tasked to develop a counterinsurgency plan to serve as a framework for expanding, training, and arming the ESAF. The product created by the General and his team became known as the “Woerner Report.” The Report was the best unified plan presented to date, but based on the dire security situation of 1981 it understandably focused more on military solutions than civic reform.⁵⁹ The two main thrusts of Woerner's recommendations were significant military expansion and aggressive, small-unit, day and night operations. Woerner's suggestion that more than half a billion dollars and five years were needed prompted ridicule around Washington, DC.⁶⁰ In fact, the aid would far exceed

⁵⁷ Colonel John Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (Summer 2003): 7.

⁵⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 101-102.

⁵⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 100.

⁶⁰ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 2-3.

that number and the advisory mission would last for almost 12 years.⁶¹ The expansion plan aimed to increase the number of battalions from 10 to 25, the same number that US plans achieved for the Philippines in the 1950s.⁶² That number would eventually exceed 25 battalions in El Salvador.

The Woerner Report has been criticized for overemphasizing combat power at the expense of civic projects. The context of the report's drafting, however, must be kept in mind when evaluating it in hindsight. The early phases of the war involved large masses of troops attempting to engage in force-on-force battles. Groups of FMLN fighters as large as 600 men assaulted ESAF positions and held significant territory. The Woerner Report focused on readying the ESAF—which barely had more men-in-arms than the FMLN—for an intense fight characterized by both conventional and irregular methods. Despite the Report's emphasis on combat effectiveness, it did consider more intangible elements related to human rights and civic action. Most of the military aid provided after the Woerner Report was contingent upon reforms to human-rights abuses and the land-tenure system. Notably, the report also provisioned for engineers to build civilian infrastructure, and was not totally dismissive of what are now known as the important “non-kinetic” aspects of counterinsurgency.⁶³

The number of US trainers which be allowed in El Salvador, an important variable for determining how the Woerner Plan would be executed, was a subject of ongoing debate in 1981. A 55-trainer limit was the product of a rush to meet a late March 1981 deadline in the US Senate for a vote on sending personnel to work with the ESAF. The conditions for the bill to pass were that they be called “trainers” and not “advisors,” and that there could only be 55 of them. The number was quite arbitrary, but sufficient to allow the bill to barely meet the approval of the Senate Subcommittee in a March 1981 vote. The bill barely passed by a vote of eight to seven.⁶⁴ SOUTHCOM Commander General Wallace Nutting had originally asked for 300 personnel, with the caveat

⁶¹ Ambassador Deane Hinton, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 111-112.

⁶² Robert D. Ramsey III, “Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam and El Salvador” (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 85.

⁶³ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 56.

⁶⁴ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 96-97.

that 500 would be an even better number to ensure mission success.⁶⁵ Later in 1981 the Pentagon would push for the more modest number of 150 trainers. Despite these requests, Under Secretary of State Walter J. Stoessel had promised no more than 55 to ensure it would pass in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee.⁶⁶ The number would be debated further in Washington, DC, but the MILGROUP needed to find creative ways to make the best use of what later became known as “The 55.”

Trainers and advisors developed innovative solutions for working around the 55-trainer cap to achieve what was necessary with the ESAF. For example, significant numbers of ESAF soldiers were brought to the United States for training starting in late 1981.⁶⁷ Success, however, came with a price. The advisor cap was not violated but such training cost four times more than it would have been if conducted in El Salvador.⁶⁸ The cost of training units in El Salvador was significantly cheaper and also imbued advisors with a better sense of the conflict and thus how to craft their training. As Colonel John D. Waghelstein, MILGROUP Commander from 1982 to 1983, explained, “Once we sat down and figured it would take 50-60 trainers to train a battalion, if they didn’t have any housekeeping duties and stuck strictly to training. There wasn’t room for them in country because of the 55-man limit, so we looked around for other locations.”⁶⁹ The prohibitive cost for training ESAF forces in the United States led to the construction of the Regional Military Training Center (RMTC) in Honduras, which would be directed by 125 American advisors.⁷⁰ The RMTC was a short-lived program and trained approximately 3,500 ESAF soldiers from 1983 to 1984. Some within the ESAF were displeased, however, that “its own” security assistance funds were being used to construct a training facility in neighboring Honduras, their enemy since the Soccer War. Likewise, Honduras was uncomfortable with “enemy” forces being

⁶⁵ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 209.

⁶⁶ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 208.

⁶⁷ There were some noted benefits to training ESAF units in the United States. Waghelstein explained, “One of the advantages was that we were able to train the battalion commander and his staff... When you train a battalion in country, the officers usually do other things.” Waghelstein in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 236.

⁶⁸ Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 13.

⁶⁹ Waghelstein in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 236.

⁷⁰ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 210.

trained on their soil, and withdrew permission for the engagement to continue in 1985.⁷¹

There were some modest attempts to offset costs and counteract the 55-trainer cap by having third-party countries train Salvadoran battalions. Colonel Waghelstein noted that there were obvious problems with this, the most problematic of which was finding leaders of Latin American countries who believed that it was in their own interest to assist El Salvador. Venezuelan Mobile Training Teams ended up training two ESAF battalions, but most of the more advanced training was left to American advisors.⁷²

One area of more advanced employment came by way of an aviation FID program that was formulated early to create a force-multiplier for the ESAF. The program concentrated on a fleet of UH-1H and UH-1M Hueys used as transports and gunships. The rotary-wing fleet was envisioned as a counter to the FMLN's mobility, and MILGROUP personnel believed it would restore the initiative back to the ESAF.⁷³ The US also supplemented the FAS with four O-2A reconnaissance aircraft, six AT-37B light attack aircraft, and two C-123K transport planes in 1982.⁷⁴ From late 1982 into 1983 the ESAF began a campaign of retribution bombing in the Chalatenango and Guazapa Volcano areas, known FMLN strongholds. The bombing campaign brought pain and suffering to countless civilians, but appears to have had little effect on the FMLN.⁷⁵ Few observers believed that the early bombing campaign's benefits outweighed the propaganda value for the FMLN, which the latter deftly exploited in the international media.⁷⁶ The FAS would improve over time, but not without some major setbacks.

One such setback came in 1982, a year which began dreadfully for the ESAF. Ilopango Airfield, the FAS's premier base, was raided by the FMLN in January of that year. The mission destroyed five Ouragans, six UH-1Hs, and three C-47s. Five other aircraft were seriously damaged in this company-sized

⁷¹ MAJ Paul P. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" (US Army War College thesis, 1996), 25.

⁷² Waghlestein in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 231-232.

⁷³ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 333.

⁷⁴ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 333.

⁷⁵ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 335.

⁷⁶ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 331.

raid by FMLN commandos. The aircraft destroyed at Ilopango comprised more than half of the FAS's fleet.⁷⁷ The commandos who waged this strike were from a small and elite unit that was trained by Cuban Special Forces.⁷⁸ The same elite insurgent unit was also responsible for demolishing the two main bridges on the Lempa River, effectively severing the Eastern third of the country from the rest, increasing FMLN control over that sector. On October 15th the FMLN blew up the Puente de Oro Bridge, severing the central government from the Northeastern hinterlands and seriously embarrassing the ESAF. The ability of the FMLN to demolish this large, sturdy, symbolic structure indicated their significant access to explosives and expertise in employing them.

General Woerner and Colonel Waghelstein worked to counter these FMLN victories by leading a group of Military and State Department personnel to devise the "National Campaign Plan" (NCP) in 1983.⁷⁹ The plan was based on the original Woerner Report. The NCP had been described as well-conceived and well-intentioned, but far beyond the ESAF's ability to execute. The plan sought to integrate security with civic action, starting with the two critical geographic departments of Usulután and San Vicente. The Army successfully cleared and held these two regions and provided protection for a corps of doctors, dentists and construction workers. The National Campaign Plan worked well in Usulután and San Vicente, but the FMLN predictably filled the void left in these two departments once the thinly-stretched Army moved elsewhere. The Salvadoran Army (SA) was simply not large enough or capable enough to clear, hold, and develop the entire country. Other developments would have to occur in the political arena.⁸⁰

Senior personnel within the MILGROUPEP hoped that their actions would cause the tide to turn against the FMLN. Colonel Joseph S. Stringham III (MILGROUPEP Commander, 1983-1984) explained that, "In '82 nobody would have given any chance at all for El Salvador. Guerrillas were at the gate. They

⁷⁷ David E. Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 80-82, and Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 334.

⁷⁸ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas*, 73-76, and Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador*, 3-8.

⁷⁹ Waghelstein in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 223.

⁸⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 103.

were sure winners. All reporting was 'The Guerrillas are on the roll.' Then all of the sudden the first glimmer appeared that democracy might make it; it might survive."⁸¹ That glimmer came not by way of some stunning military reversal, but through political developments explored below.

Reform toward a more liberal democratic government would initially have to emerge alongside a right-wing movement that was becoming troublingly popular. An ultra-conservative, pro-market, and anti-communist coalition came in the form of the ARENA Party (National Republican Alliance). ARENA was headed by former Army Major Roberto D'Aubuisson. The party's position on the insurgency was unequivocal and emphasized the unconstrained use of force to crush the FMLN. D'Aubuisson has been described as both a spellbinding orator and a bloodthirsty psychopath by US statesmen. Implicated in death squad activities, D'Aubuisson earned the nickname "Blowtorch Bob" based on his alleged preference in torture implements.⁸²

⁸¹ Waghlestein in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 170.

⁸² There are alternative perspectives on Robert D'Aubuisson. One US Army Lieutenant Colonel was assigned to a basic training center near the Gulf of Fonseca. The Training Center commander, an ESAF Colonel who had showed tremendous appreciation for human rights, emotionally pleaded that the stories about D'Aubuisson had been fabricated by the Christian Democratic Party. The Colonel had known D'Aubuisson for many years. One day, the Colonel took the American advisor to a barbeque on an island in the Gulf of Fonseca which D'Aubuisson attended. The advisor recounts a conversation with the maligned ARENA politician where the latter supposedly recommended serious punishment for recent human rights violators. Additionally, D'Aubuisson asked the advisor to bring back some 12-gauge shotgun shells for him upon return from his upcoming leave to the United States. The advisor respectfully declined the request. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" 15-16.



Image 5: President Álvaro Magaña with Vice President George H.W. Bush

Source: US Department of State



Image 6: President José Napoleón Duarte

Source: Raymond Bonner, Weakness and Deceit (New York: New York Times Books, inc., 1984)



Image 7: Roberto D'Aubuisson

Source: Official Photograph, Government of El Salvador

The outcome of the 1982 election for provisional presidency which pitted D'Aubuisson against the more moderate Álvaro Magaña was favorable to the FID mission. Democrats in the US Congress had compromised by allowing a small number of trainers and limited funding to support El Salvador, but insisted that they would act to cut-off aid if D'Aubuisson were elected. Magaña fortunately won the elections. The new president was a banker who had controlled the ESAF's finances, thus making him acceptable to the military, conservatives, and landed elites. Despite these semi-conservative credentials, Magaña's nationalism and thirst for FMLN blood did not match D'Aubuisson's, who would run again in 1984 and would fortunately lose. A decade of blood and strife still lay ahead for El Salvador, but the desire among its people for representation was reflected in the high participation in this election throughout the country. Popular elections gave the population an alternative to the perpetual bloodbath and cycle of coups, while at the same time sapped some legitimacy from the FMLN, which claimed that the state would never allow honest elections.⁸³

Another positive development came in December 1983 with Vice President George H. W. Bush's visit to El Salvador. Bush's visit would have

⁸³ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 104-105.

extreme significance for the FID mission and provided valuable lessons on leverage. At a dinner hosted by President Magaña, Bush offered a toast that was recorded and subsequently published in a State Department bulletin. Tactful ultimatums were given, primarily indicating that the death squads must be reined in, lest support be lost. Bush warned:

These rightwing fanatics are the best friends the Soviets, the Cubans, the Sandinista *comandantes*, and the Salvadoran guerrillas have. Every murderous act they commit poisons the well of friendship between our two countries and advances the cause of those who would impose an alien dictatorship on the people of El Salvador. These cowardly death squad terrorists are just as repugnant to me, to President Reagan, to the Congress, and to the American people as the terrorists of the left... We in the United States have never asked others to be exactly like us. We're a nation that is constantly debating our own shortcomings. But on certain fundamental principles, all Americans are united. I ask you as a friend not to make the mistake of thinking that there is any division in my country on this question. It is not just the President; it is not just me or the Congress. If these death squad murders continue, you will lose the support of the American people.⁸⁴

While ARENA ignored Bush's warnings, other political parties took note. José Napoleón Duarte, a once-exiled Christian Democratic Party (PDC) politician, would become an important figure in Salvadoran political reform as a centrist leader. Duarte had been involved in political activism from an early age, and was present at the 1944 protests that brought an end the eccentric Martínez's regime. He was the illegitimate son of a tailor, but was able to attend Notre Dame University in the United States after his father won the lottery.⁸⁵ Duarte had been detained, beaten and exiled to Venezuela after losing the 1972 election, which had been rigged by the ESAF.⁸⁶ The PDC's moderate credentials led many military officers to support Duarte as the only hope to prevent a communist victory and ensure a lasting peace. Nevertheless, the more conservative ESAF officers referred to Duarte as a *sandía*, Spanish for

⁸⁴ State Dept Bulletin quoted in Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 36-37.

⁸⁵ Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 267.

⁸⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 83.

“watermelon”: Green PDC colors on the outside, but “red” (i.e., Socialist or Communist) on the inside.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, MILGROUП advisors aiming to co-opt the better PN politicians and military officers noted important similarities between the anti-Huk campaign and the situation in El Salvador. Colonel Waghelstein’s own study of the Huk insurrection highlighted the devastating effect that hunter-killer teams had on Taruc and his men. The persistent pressure applied by such teams not only made it impossible for the Huks to rest, but even to take their boots off. Waghelstein recognized that the situations in the Philippines and El Salvador were different, but that certain key similarities existed. Both cases initially pitted an overly-brutal conventionally-oriented military against a peasant-based guerrilla movement. Both insurgencies moved toward guerrilla warfare after a failed “final offensive.” Both partner nation militaries initially focused on large unproductive sweeps which tended to alienate the population. Finally, both cases seemed to highlight the importance of land and banking reform.⁸⁸ Colonel Waghelstein also explained, “I took for my model the quiet, in-the-background role that Colonel Edward G. Lansdale had played in support of Ramón Magsaysay’s 1950s success in the Philippines against the Huk insurgency. Lansdale’s account of his experiences provided many useful ideas. None could be applied elsewhere without modification, but there was a wealth of general wisdom in his approach.”⁸⁹ When asked to compare his own counterparts to Magsaysay, Colonel Waghelstein noted that such a comparison would be unfair to almost any political leader. He did describe one ESAF leader, Colonel Vides Casanova, as “capable, likeable, and smart.”⁹⁰ Vides was a significant improvement over some of the earlier ESAF leaders. He had the courage to oppose D’Aubuisson and some of the more brutal ESAF officers, but was not without the blood of suspected FMLN supporters on his own hands.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 83.

⁸⁸ Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 9.

⁸⁹ Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 8.

⁹⁰ Waghelstein, interview with author.

⁹¹ Vides Casanova left El Salvador to reside in Florida after the war, and was recently convicted of torture and forced to pay millions to several victims. For details, see

From the fall of 1983 until 1984, the FMLN also drew blood in combat with the ESAF, which was slowly improving under the tutelage of its American advisors. October of 1984 was a particularly grim month for the ESAF. Colonel Stringham recalled, “We lost the Cazador Battalion trained at the RMTC, and we lost a Salvadoran Battalion at Cocawatiki [sic]... This took place over a period of about three weeks, and I am talking about ‘wiped out!’”⁹² The MILGROUP Commander noted that at times “[I] thought we were going to lose the whole war outright.”⁹³ Two of the US-trained battalions were decimated in battle with the FMLN.⁹⁴ ESAF casualties for 1983, numbering over 5,000, were more than double the figure for 1982.⁹⁵ Some ESAF Commanders confided in Stringham that they believed that the Army was disintegrating.⁹⁶

The year 1983 was grim not only for the ESAF but also for the MILGROUP. The first American wounded in El Salvador was Army Staff Sergeant Jay T. Stanley. Stanley was aboard a UH-1 directing a firefight in the village of Berlin along with two other American advisors. The wounding of an American advisor understandably sparked considerable domestic controversy, given the status of American personnel as “trainers.” President Reagan’s political opponents used the scenario to accuse the President of violating the War Powers Act. Stanley and two others were subsequently expelled from El Salvador. American advisors faced other dangers in El Salvador as well. For example, in May of 1983, two Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) special operators – Commanders Melvin “Skip” Crane and Albert “Spanky” Schaufelberger—were assassinated by the FMLN in San Salvador.⁹⁷

In the midst of these difficulties, President Reagan convened the bipartisan Kissinger Commission in July of 1983 to examine Central American policy from the perspective of American grand strategy. The members of the Kissinger Commission recommended a \$400 million emergency stabilization

<http://www.npr.org/2011/04/22/135624682/torture-trial-starts-for-salvadoran-in-florida>.

⁹² Colonel Joseph S. Stringham in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 149.

⁹³ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 10.

⁹⁴ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 23.

⁹⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 95.

⁹⁶ Colonel Joseph S. Stringham in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 149.

⁹⁷ Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 15.

plan for several Latin American countries including El Salvador. It also tied continued military aid to demonstrable improvements in the human rights situation.⁹⁸ The Commission's final report emphasized the relationship between American values and interests: "While the objectives of security and human rights are sometimes counterpoised against each other, they are actually closely related. Without adequate military aid, Salvadoran forces would not be able to carry out the modern counter-insurgency tactics that would keep civilian losses to a minimum."⁹⁹

The military aid to the ESAF finally translated to visible combat effects against the FMLN in 1984, as the Kissinger Commission's members had predicted. ESAF manning jumped from 12,000 personnel at the end of 1980 to 42,000 by 1984. The ESAF also scored some successes by repelling several large FMLN offensives.¹⁰⁰ More mobile elite units augmented by airpower forced the FMLN into a grinding war of attrition waged by smaller units.¹⁰¹ FAS reconnaissance and strike aircraft drove FMLN units, which once operated in battalion-sized formations, to disperse and constantly remain on the move.¹⁰² As one author noted, "The ability of the insurgent forces to retreat before government offensives and then quickly rebuild after their departure was a result of a change in guerrilla strategy in response to the new counterinsurgency strategy. The government's growing capacity to locate capacity to locate insurgent forces with spotter aircraft, to deploy government troops rapidly by helicopters, and to bomb controlled zones intensively took increasing toll of FMLN troops and civilian supporters."¹⁰³ By late 1984, FAS bombing was becoming more effective and dispersing large groups of FMLN fighters.¹⁰⁴

Combined with these victories on the battlefield, political fortunes shined upon the GoES more favorably than the FMLN. Duarte edged D'Aubuisson with a difference of only 100,000 votes in the 1984 election, winning with 53.6

⁹⁸ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 119.

⁹⁹ Kissinger Report, Quoted in Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts," 6.

¹⁰⁰ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 39.

¹⁰¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 95.

¹⁰² Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 124-125.

¹⁰³ Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 134.

¹⁰⁴ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 336.

percent of the vote much to the relief of the advisors and State Department.¹⁰⁵ A victory for D'Aubuisson, who promised that El Salvador would become a "Tomb for the Reds," would increase the counterinsurgency campaign's brutality. Increased focus on killing suspected insurgents and supporters would deemphasize the consideration for civic programs that the MILGROUP had urged, and likely resulted in significant withdrawals of American assistance.¹⁰⁶

From Stalemate to Negotiations: 1985-1992

The FMLN carried out a low-key "strategic counteroffensive" from 1984 until 1989 with the intent to run down the Salvadoran economy and wear out the military. Its leaders also hoped to take advantage of the ESAF's frustrations by provoking retributions that could be publicized, leading to a possible withdrawal of American support and aid. FMLN leadership based their hopes for success throughout this period on what FMLN Commander Joaquin Villalobos termed, "the communication of violence."¹⁰⁷ Villalobos was assuming that the people, out of fear, would side with the armed party able to most effectively bring arms to bear. The "communication of violence" predictably led to growing popular distaste for the FMLN when that doctrine was translated into increasingly brutal guerrilla actions.¹⁰⁸ Much of the Salvadoran public reacted to this development by shifting blame for their suffering from GoES and America to the FMLN. The result of the FMLN's excesses is very similar to what had happened in the Philippines in the 1950s when blame shifted from the Armed Forces and Philippine Constabulary to the Hukbalahaps. Also similar to the Philippine case, some improvements were seen in the Salvadoran Air Force. Colonel James J. Steele, MILGROUP Commander from 1984 until 1986, observed that, "the government forces were obviously getting better; the Air Force was particularly effective, and the guerrillas saw their prospects for a quick victory beginning to fade... After the presidential elections of 1984,

¹⁰⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 107.

¹⁰⁶ Loveman and Davies, *Che Guevarra*, 404-405.

¹⁰⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 96.

¹⁰⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 97.

principally to survive, the guerrillas initiated and implemented a major change of strategy.”¹⁰⁹

The ESAF changed its strategy too based on advice from the MILGROUPE. Several ambitious plans that rightfully emphasized civic action were waged in the late 1980s, but saw only very limited success.¹¹⁰ Operation PHOENIX and *Unidos Para Reconstruir* (United for Reconstruction) were both launched in the 1986. Neither was very successful.¹¹¹ The first plan was directed at rooting the FMLN out of its hideouts around the Guazapa Volcano while the second sought to build up public services and infrastructure. The ESAF simply did not have the manning to do both in all but a few geographic departments.¹¹² To worsen the situation, a massive earthquake on 12 October 1986 would be an all-consuming affair, diverting soldiers to a recovery effort. Under these conditions, the conflict lingered on, albeit at a lower intensity than what was seen in the early 1980s.

The late 1980s has been described as an era of “equilibrium” or “stalemate,” where initiative gradually shifted away from the FMLN and towards the state. The shift was never sufficient to enable the state to achieve a conclusive victory. The ESAF had been developed to a point where it could not be defeated, but neither could it win. Indicative of that condition of stalemate, Colonel John Ellerson, MILGROUPE Commander from 1986 until 1987, described the FAS as an “Air Force that is an insurance policy. The ESAF can’t win with it, but they can’t lose with it either.”¹¹³ The Salvadoran Army’s growth was significant, but once security assistance truly began taking effect in 1983 and 1984 the Salvadoran Air Force (FAS) inventory expanded exponentially (Reference Chart 6.1). The insurance policy precluded the FMLN from massing as it had during the 1981 “Final Offensive,” at least without falling victim to a rain of aerial fires.

¹⁰⁹ Colonel James J. Steele, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 146.

¹¹⁰ Ramsey, “Advising Indigenous Forces,” 86.

¹¹¹ Ramsey, “Advising Indigenous Forces,” 86.

¹¹² Colonel Carlos Reynaldo Lopez Nuila, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 225-226.

¹¹³ Colonel John Ellerson in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 306.

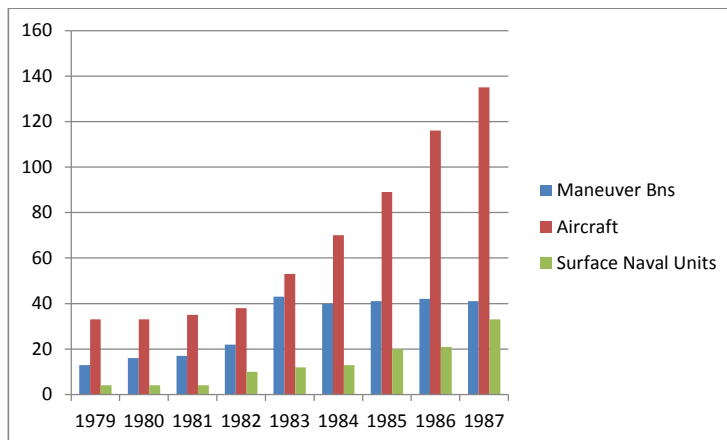


Figure 13: ESAF Growth, 1979-1987

Source: Author's original work. Based on values from Bacevich et. al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*.

While the ESAF's effectiveness improved in the late 1980s, the number of political killings plummeted throughout the decade. Reduced kidnapping and execution was partially attributable to stipulations attached to American security assistance. By 1986, death squad killings had decreased by 90 percent since their peak in 1981.¹¹⁴ The following year, the rate would drop to 23 per month, a remarkable improvement when compared to the average of 610 per month in 1980.¹¹⁵

Aid continued through the stalemate phase, despite significant criticism which was based on the perception that the war was an intractable quagmire. Critics believed that because the war would drag on indefinitely because of the stalemate on the battlefield. Skeptical academics and political leaders questioned the very idea of counterinsurgency in the late 1980s and early 1990s. *New York Times* reporter James Lemoyne, for example, published an influential article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1989 which cast doubt on the idea that the war would ever terminate. He explained to the public that, "It is a long-term, controversial and highly problematic task that pretentiously used to be

¹¹⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 107.

¹¹⁵ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 20.

called 'nation-building'.¹¹⁶ The reporter described an unwinnable condition, where "The rebels... have thoroughly infiltrated the army and know its weaknesses."¹¹⁷ Lemoyne expressed that the FMLN was unstoppable, describing how "In a meeting once at his sometimes-base in the village of Perquin, Villalobos reminded me of accounts of the young Castro, or Mao, or Ho Chi Minh—he is that intelligent, that militaristic, that nationalistic, that dogmatic, that egotistically sure of his own destiny."¹¹⁸ Still failing to see the difference between Vietnam and El Salvador, journalist Saul Landau claimed that in 1987 the US government was "in the full and unquestioning process of developing a Vietnam-style counterinsurgency war."¹¹⁹ Lemoyne declared that "a settlement appears far, far away."¹²⁰ FMLN leader Miguel Castellanos described training that he received in Vietnam in 1983, where his "graduation exercise" was an assault on a mock-up of the US Embassy. Lemoyne reported that "Guerrilla sappers may similarly penetrate the embassy in San Salvador one day."¹²¹

A second ambitious attempt at an FMLN "Final Offensive" was executed in 1989 to break the stalemate with hopes to make the aforementioned sorts of scenarios reality. The FMLN failed to achieve its objectives in the second offensive, just as the earlier one in January of 1981. The second final offensive came as a surprise, however, indicating that ESAF intelligence was still limited in many ways.¹²² Attacks began on the night of 11 November, the same evening that the Marine Corps Ball was being held at the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador. Some advisors were stuck in the capitol for as long as one week before they were able to return to their partner brigades.¹²³ The response to the offensive included some prominent human rights violations on the ESAF's part,

¹¹⁶ James Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1989), 107.

¹¹⁷ Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," 111.

¹¹⁸ Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," 110. Villalobos has since shifted his views to the political center and, ironically, become a major critic of leftist governments in Latin America. He has also served as an advisor for peace processes in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Bosnia.

¹¹⁹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 132.

¹²⁰ Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," 117.

¹²¹ Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," 118.

¹²² Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 87.

¹²³ MAJ Paul P. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" (US Army War College thesis, 1996), 9.

but to a degree and on a scale vastly below those of the first “Final Offensive.” The massacre of six Jesuits and several other civilians at the Universidad Centroamericana in response to the offensive resulted in major reduction to US assistance. The massacre also displayed how the change to “clean” or legal and appropriate counterinsurgency was difficult to instill in all elements of the rapidly-expanded ESAF.¹²⁴ The FMLN came close to the outskirts of San Salvador during the three-week offensive, but ultimately failed to secure a decisive defeat of the ESAF.¹²⁵ At this point it became clear that a decisive victory was unattainable for either side, thus beginning a phase of negotiation that would last for three years.¹²⁶

El Salvador’s extreme political parties had moved toward the center by the time of the second failed “final offensive.” ARENA, once the party of “Blowtorch Bob D’Aubuisson,” had undergone significant change. More progressive businessmen who did not identify with the old oligarchs realized the D’Aubuisson’s brutal approach was unsustainable and unpalatable for both the majority of Salvadorans and the international community. The more moderate Alfredo Cristiani was selected as the party’s presidential candidate. ARENA won the 1989 election convincingly, and earned a solid majority in the legislature. The war dragged on, but it was clear even to the conservative ARENA party that some sort of negotiated settlement was in order.¹²⁷ The failure of the second “Final Offensive” in 1989 led to a request for UN mediation by five Central American presidents, including President Cristiani of El Salvador.

The population of El Salvador was war-weary by 1991. Unemployment within the country was 33 percent and nine-tenths of the population was living in poverty. Nearly 80,000 had died in the war, and most were civilians. The economy was growing by 3.5 percent, which gave a glimmer of hope to the idea that El Salvador could rebuild. By 1990 the US Operational Planning and

¹²⁴ Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr. in Che Guevara: *Guerrilla Warfare*, 3rd Ed. With Revised and Updated Introduction and Case Studies (New York: SR Books, 1997), 407-408.

¹²⁵ Cale, “The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador,” 9.

¹²⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 95.

¹²⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 108.

Training Teams' primary function was to monitor for human rights abuses.¹²⁸ The US Congress elected to cut aid to El Salvador by 50 percent in 1991, in large part due to improvements within the country, and they elected to make further cuts the following year. Outside support for the FMLN withered with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A series of negotiations following the Soviet Union's collapse finally yielded a settlement. Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew the Soviet Union from pronounced superpower competition with the US during the late 1980s. The Soviet Union reduced aid to Cuba significantly, and the FMLN was only one step further downstream in the funding and equipping chain.¹²⁹ Cuts in aid, combined with fewer incidents of violence, signaled to the Bush Administration, GoES, and the FMLN that a negotiated settlement might be necessary and possible.¹³⁰

The warring parties' representatives met outside of El Salvador to discuss concessions. The FMLN agreed to UN-mediated negotiations in 1990. The negotiations called for reforms in the ESAF, the judicial system, the electoral system, and for the punishment of human rights violators.¹³¹ Next, the New York City Accord was signed on 25 September 1991. The New York City Accord established the Committee for the Consolidation of the Peace (COPAZ). COPAZ paved the way for GOES, FMLN, political parties, and the Catholic Church's representatives to act within a common framework. Finally, on 16 January 1992 President Cristiani and the FMLN signed a peace treaty in Mexico City. The FMLN's armed elements demobilized in December of that year and took on a new life as a legitimate political party.¹³²

The negotiated settlement eventually reached in El Salvador contradicted some commonly-held "truths" about the conflict which are echoed about other irregular wars in modern times. As early as 1983, commanders in the MILGROUP, ESAF, and FMLN "did not believe for a minute that there is much

¹²⁸ Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 88.

¹²⁹ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas*, 176-177, and Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 135.

¹³⁰ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 583-584.

¹³¹ Loveman and Davies, *Che Guevara*, 412.

¹³² Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 28.

chance for power sharing.”¹³³ As late as 1991, Rand analyst Benjamin C. Schwarz lamented that, “despite the end of the Cold War... the American project is far from over.”¹³⁴ Schwarz was proved wrong only a year later. Observers from all angles had continued to believe that the conflict would never end and that negotiation was impossible. This proved untrue in the case of El Salvador.

¹³³ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 71.

¹³⁴ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, x.

CHAPTER 7

The Promises and Perils of Leverage:

An Analysis of Foreign Internal Defense in El Salvador

The military stalemate secured the United States' minimal strategic aims: It prevented the government of El Salvador from falling to a communist insurgency.

—Rand Corporation Report, 2012

What is really admirable is the King's wisdom: pursuing a major objective with limited resources, he did not try to undertake anything beyond his strength, but just enough to get him what he wanted.

—Carl von Clausewitz commenting on Frederick the Great
On War

If the US experience in El Salvador is nearly forgotten today, the principal reason is because by not using American forces its direct costs remained low.

—Todd Greentree, Foreign Service Officer, US Department of State
Crossroads of Intervention

The 2012 Rand Corporation study quoted above sought to put the El Salvador Foreign Internal Defense (FID) mission into perspective as a qualified success, beset by major shortcomings. More accurately, the mission *was* a qualified success, but the reason it must be qualified is *not* because it only achieved minimal strategic aims. As Clausewitz suggests in his observation about Frederick the Great, the fact that minimum aims were achieved with so few resources might be *precisely why* a mission is remarkable. Yet despite the remarkable smallness of the American intervention, the El Salvador mission benefitted from good fortune with the fall of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the MILGROUP advisors became well aware that while the limited size of their contingent had some advantages, there were certain undesirable characteristics of the ESAF that could not be changed.

This chapter begins by analyzing the challenges posed to integrating, socializing and sustaining new El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) capabilities, and how advisors overcame them. Next, the ESAF's absorptive capacity will be considered, specifically focusing on the use of security assistance as leverage to inspire improved human rights considerations. Finally, American interests and the costs of intervention are outlined and used to evaluate the campaign. This analysis will demonstrate that US intervention in El Salvador was a qualified success, but one with contextual characteristics that would make it difficult to repeat in the modern legal and informational environment.

Key Foreign Internal Defense Considerations

Organizational Socialization

Advisors of the El Salvador MILGROUP recognized that integration between higher and lower echelons was essential.¹ The MILGROUP functioned similarly to JUSMAG-Philippines to ensure that advice was communicated to headquarters, operational, and tactical leadership. A small number of permanent-party advisors worked at the ministerial and higher-headquarters level. Operational Planning and Training Teams (OPATTs) were integrated into brigades to advise ongoing missions at the operational level. Training in new tactics, techniques, procedures, and equipment were conducted at the tactical level by Mobile Training Teams (MTTs). More Partner Nation (PN) personnel were sent abroad from El Salvador than from the Philippines based on the 55-trainer limitation.

The OPATTs fostered integration, but the scope of their effect was limited by the 55-trainer limit. MILGROUP Commander Colonel Joseph Stringham devised a plan to assign OPATTs at the brigade-headquarter level.² Only two OPATTs could be provided at that level, and these were deployed to the most active departments of San Vicente and Usulután.³ These OPATTs consisted of two-to-three Officers and NCOs who lived and worked with brigade leadership

¹ Joe Andrade, "El Salvador: One Soldier's Perspective," presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012, 18.

² Robert D. Ramsey III, "Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam and El Salvador" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 88.

³ Waghelstein, interviewed by the author, March 2013.

and training elements.⁴ Simple math demonstrates that the number of trainers would need to be elevated to slightly over 200 to cover all of the departments in addition to other duties. One advisor noted that by late 1990, 25 of the 55 trainers were advising at the Brigade level while the rest were primarily in San Salvador.⁵ Having a slightly higher number of advisors would have been ideal, since it was noted that OPATTs and USAID personnel at lower echelons also had the positive effect of curbing corruption and skimming from US-provided programs.⁶

Capabilities Integration

Joint training between El Salvador's Army and Air Force (FAS) for missions demanding integration was non-existent in 1981.⁷ The Air Force was described as a highly-parochial organization that even had its own airborne infantry. The FAS's airborne forces engaged in ground combat without any prior coordination with the Army early in the war. FAS Chief of Staff, General Juan Bustillo, ensured that air support was provided to his friends and denied to his rivals. The FAS's reluctance to operate jointly seems to have changed throughout the war, particular in terms of integration between rotary-wing forces and infantry.⁸

The ESAF latched onto the concept of airmobile operations. Colonel Stringham was a major proponent of helicopters as a means to deny the initiative to the FMLN. Stringham noted that the El Salvadoran economy would not sustain much more than 50,000 troops, so force-multipliers had to be developed. He assessed that rotary-wing mobility was the most effective of such measures.⁹ Despite the benefits of joint airmobile operations, the ESAF may

⁴ MAJ Jeremy L. Simmons and CPT Steven P. Basilici, "Transformation: A Bold Case for Unconventional Warfare" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2004), 98.

⁵ MAJ Paul P. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" (US Army War College thesis, 1996), 2.

⁶ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 19.

⁷ Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 331.

⁸ James S. Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," *Airpower Journal*, Summer 1998. Accessed at www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj98/sum98/corum.html (accessed 12 May 2013).

⁹ Colonel Joseph S. Stringham III (Commander, Military Group, El Salvador, 1982-1983), interviewed by Colonel Charles A. Carlton, 28 May 1985, US Army War

have embraced this approach too much. Later advisors noted that airmobile operations became a sort of obsession, and might have drawn soldiers away from the population, from whom they needed to be securing allegiance.¹⁰

American advisors and Foreign Service officers recognized the importance of the population early on, but assistance and civic action were poorly coordinated in the intervention's early phases. The "Woerner Report" understandably focused on security at a time when military defeat looked imminent, but settlement depended on an approach that coordinated security with development. American security assistance laws restricted the advisors from using their budgets or training expertise to execute a robust and well-directed civic action program. USAID was chronically underfunded and could not make up for what the military lacked. Todd Greentree explained that, "There was no support net for democracy in the American arsenal, only the tools and programs to fight against something."¹¹ The 1982 version of Title-22, US Code, demanded that moneys for military and civic programs were quarantined from one and other, precluding necessary integration between the two.¹² One account in particular demonstrates both the inadequacy of early civic action attempts and the cynicism it could breed: "Clowns, a mariachi band and skimpily clad dancers perform between speeches by Salvadoran army officers and social workers calling on peasants to reject the guerrilla. Meanwhile, army barbers cut hair, and soldiers pass out rice, dresses, and medicine... 'You see the army winning hearts and minds,' [a US advisor] says, 'This is low-intensity conflict doctrine in action.'"¹³ The National Campaign Plan of 1983 attempted to integrate security with civic action, but required significantly more resources to work. Greentree remarked that this plan was, "founded on a solid accumulation of lessons learned from other

College/US Army Military History Institute Senior Officer Oral History Program, Carlisle Barracks, PA., 54.

¹⁰ Waghelstein, interviewed by the author, 21 March 2013.

¹¹ Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 20-21.

¹² Andrew J. Bacevich, et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis Report* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 12.

¹³ Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Rand Corporation Report R4042 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1991), 55.

counterinsurgency experiences and codified in the US Army's Internal Defense and Development Doctrine, also known as Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The only problem was that it would have been a stretch for even the most developed nation to carry out... The National Plan, however well-intentioned and conceived, was made in the USA and was simply beyond the scope and competence of the Salvadorans."¹⁴ Eventually integration between military and civic programs did improve marginally, but only after years of trial and error and overcoming of significant bureaucratic and legal obstacles.¹⁵

Sustainment

Advisors recognized that simple improvements were what the ESAF needed. One advisor explained the mindset with the motto "KISSSS": "Keep it simple, small, sustainable, and Salvadoran."¹⁶ Colonel Waghelstein explained that the principle of simplicity was not universally understood, noting, "What Washington and the ESAF meant by countering the insurgency usually meant some short-term fix involving 'stuff' our government was pushing, stuff to which the ESAF either wanted or would become addicted to... Both the 'correct and preferred' solutions usually meant large infusions of armament. I had witnessed the effective use of trainers/advisors and only the most basic equipment in Venezuela and Bolivia in the '60s and was convinced that what were needed in El Salvador were boots, rations, and lots of training—not expensive hard-to-maintain hardware."¹⁷ Colonel Waghelstein, as MILGROUP Commander, noted that he was not against helicopters or technology in general, but had to spend the few available dollars as wisely as possible. This meant that an airmobile concept supported by a bigger fleet of helicopters would have two negative effects. First, it would draw money away from other critical programs. Second, Waghelstein felt that the airmobile-focused approach would keep troops "above" the population instead of among them.¹⁸ Colonel Waghelstein's concerns about the helicopters were justified when he was the

¹⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 103.

¹⁵ Joe Andrade, "El Salvador: One Soldier's Perspective", Presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012., 6.

¹⁶ Colonel John C. Ellerson, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 472.

¹⁷ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 11.

¹⁸ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 12.

MILGROUP Commander from 1982 to 1983. Colonel Stringham, Waghelstein's replacement, took command of the MILGROUP at a critical juncture in the war when the FMLN was increasing its battalion-sized assaults. Stringham's problems of enemy mass and maneuver were thus dealt with through airmobile operations, kinetic airpower combined with reconnaissance, and improved employment of artillery. This would last for a short time until the FMLN converted to more dispersed Guerrilla tactics by 1985.

Stringham had answered the FMLN by acquiring a sustainable mobility platform: UH-1M and UH-1H Hueys. The FAS's fleet of Hueys provides a good example of an introduction of new but sustainable technology. Many of the same aircraft turned over to El Salvador during the war are still in service today. Unlike many small developing countries in the region, El Salvador conducts all of its own maintenance without significant outside help. For purposes of comparison, a number of other small Central American and Caribbean militaries have transitioned from the UH-1H to newer Bell-412s or Huey-IIs. The militaries with the newer aircraft are far less self-sufficient than the Salvadorans in terms of maintenance. Nonetheless, concerns regarding spare parts are undoubtedly beginning to plague the aging FAS UH-1Hs.¹⁹

Colonel Waghelstein described another paradoxical benefit to having a force with limited technological means and manning for technicians. When the Pentagon or the ESAF proposed an expensive technical program that was not suited to the mission, he could tactfully sideline it. When modern fighter aircraft were proposed, all that Waghelstein had to do was ask what advisory program his leadership would like to cancel in order to accomplish it. Many advanced capabilities would have required a force of advisors accounting for nearly the entire 55-man training force. The MILGROUP Commander used this technique to deal with overzealous personnel from both the US and Salvadoran militaries. Advisors countered outlandish ideas based on unsuitable technology or programs championed by the ESAF prestige.²⁰ The technology that was transferred was adequate and accompanied by sustainment programs that worked well.

¹⁹ Interview with 6 SOS Advisor, 15 April 2013.

²⁰ Waghelstein, interviewed by author, 21 March 2013.

Time and FID in El Salvador

A curious inversion to common-knowledge about the effect of domestic opinion on great power intervention occurred in the case of El Salvador. While it is often taken as a given that public patience, particularly in the United States, will wane with time and the loss of life and treasure in protracted wars, the reverse seemed to happen in El Salvador. The conflict's earliest years were marked by notable controversy, but the public seems to have nearly forgotten about it by the late 1980s. *Newsweek* featured a cover story in May of 1983, when Lieutenant Commander Albert Schaufelberger was assassinated, entitled, "The First Casualty." The article suggested more casualties were to follow, and the inevitable devolution into "another Vietnam." Conversely, Staff Sergeant Gregory Fronius's death in a mortar attack on El Paraíso in 1987 was viewed as a tragic, but received much less sensationalistic coverage.²¹ Many press reporters had matured and shed their initial zealously anti-interventionist stances and declined to embellish Fronius's death to sell the Vietnam analogy.

American opinion of intervention in the war was generally low, but the contingent was small enough that it did not provoke enough distaste to preclude continuing involvement. Most Americans did not pay significant attention to the issue, and "By the end of 1983 the US public was perplexed. The majority, according to polls, did not know whom the United States was supporting in either Nicaragua or El Salvador. People confused the right-wing Contras with the left-wing Salvadoran rebels and some thought that the United States was aiding the guerrillas in El Salvador and opposing those in Nicaragua."²² The American public generally had an unfavorable opinion of the Reagan Administration's Latin America policies for the duration of both terms. However, as Latin America scholar William Leogrande identified, "... so long as US troops stayed out, most voters paid little attention to Central America, and the White House could ignore the polls."²³

Despite the value of smallness when it came to those issues of public opinion, leadership at various levels continually pushed for escalation. The

²¹ Paul Cale, "United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992," 34.

²² Saul Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 118.

²³ William M. Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States and Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 588-589.

country team successfully countered arguments for the mission to change from a FID campaign into a larger intervention. Ambassador Deane Hinton constantly felt that United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) was trying to run the war, and to escalate it at times when the Salvadorans knew it was theirs to win or lose, and were therefore more receptive to US advice and leverage.²⁴ Colonel Waghelstein applauded State Department leaders who blocked SOUTHCOM from escalation, "... Ambassador [Hinton] was not about to turn over the running of the war to what he viewed as a bunch of conventional soldiers whose only solution was to add more, make it louder, and make it bigger. What needed to be done was to keep it small in terms of focus and not become preoccupied with gimmicks and gadgets and more firepower..."²⁵ Despite the advantages of smallness, Waghelstein also acknowledged that, "Trainers equal the speed limit."²⁶ What this means is that the speed that new capabilities could be created was contingent upon the number of advisors present, and it seemed that the arbitrary number of 55 was slightly below the ideal "sweet spot."

Absorptive Capacity

The 55 trainers confronted challenges in El Salvador based on that country's well-defined national identity and reputation for resisting external pressures, making for noteworthy cultural impediments to the absorption of US assistance. El Salvador's "culture of violence," combined with the institutional impact of the Soccer War's success, made it difficult for US advisors to convince ESAF leaders that a "softer" approach to counterinsurgency was in their interest.²⁷ Conventional operations were reinforced in many Latin American militaries when excess World War II materials were supplied to them by the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These conventional weapons systems were accompanied by US training that emphasized regular warfare. El Salvador fought the Soccer War in 1969 and its successes validated a

²⁴ Ambassador Deane Hinton, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 104.

²⁵ Colonel Waghelstein, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 105.

²⁶ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 13.

²⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 75.

conventional approach to many ESAF officers.²⁸ The Soccer War also taught them that civilians were to be considered as impediments to maneuver, not as important in their own right for purpose of state or government legitimacy. The *Matanza* mentality had persisted since that gruesome event in the early 1930s, and was hard to shrug off.

The ESAF limited their own ability to absorb aid not only by disregarding human rights but also with endemic corruption. This was true particularly in the war's earliest years, as was the case in the Philippines. Certain elements of the ESAF literally "absorbed" US aid in another unfortunate way: by skimming funds or "rat-holing" equipment based on what Colonel Stringham described as a "war-lord mentality."²⁹ Corruption was ingrained into the ESAF from the beginning, and officers promoted through *tanda* were routinely confiscating salaries for nonexistent "ghost soldiers" within their battalions.³⁰ An anonymous advisor tellingly remarked that, "Their vision stops where it begins to change their lifestyle," and that lifestyle had characteristics that certainly impeded the effective absorption of assistance.³¹

Salvadoran culture worked against absorbing the concept of a professional NCO corps. American small-unit tactics and counterinsurgency doctrine emphasize that initiative is crucial at the lowest levels of leadership, necessitating a professional NCO corps. Attempts to create such a corps in El Salvador wasted precious time and money.³² The attempt to establish a new caste in the ESAF highlighted, "the difficulty of undertaking institutional change that ignores strong cultural biases."³³ It was also noted that, "the American attempt to create an NCO corps appears naïve and presumptuous."³⁴

The challenges of working in a culture without the right demographics or disposition to foster professional NCOs in the American mold went beyond El Salvador's Army. The importance of NCOs holds true not only in American concepts of ground combat, but also for technically-oriented aviation and

²⁸ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 12.

²⁹ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 50.

³⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 103.

³¹ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 24.

³² Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 98.

³³ Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 99.

³⁴ Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 99.

maritime capabilities. Maintenance without professional craftsmen is unthinkable. The challenges of developing militaries that devalue maintenance or the dignity of enlisted men should not surprise American advisors. The ESAF was comprised of officers plucked from society's elite and an enlisted force of peasant conscripts. Similar situations characterize many developing militaries. One Salvadoran officer commented, "NCOs as you Americans view them are foreign to us."³⁵ Andrew Bacevich summarized this point well when he stated that, "The lesson is clear: In choosing targets for institutional change, American military policy must concentrate on issues that are not only relevant to counterinsurgency—as NCOs indisputably are—but also reasonably attainable given a war's specific context. To do otherwise would risk squandering resources that are already in short supply."³⁶

Officer training, on the other hand, had some notable successes. Lieutenants trained in an Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Benning performed particularly well in battle.³⁷ ESAF officers initially pushed to have them matriculate at their own Academy upon return from the US, insinuating that they had gotten an "easy-pass" in America. But when the lieutenants acquitted themselves in battle, their superiors refused to give them up for the sake of a rite of passage.³⁸ The number of junior officers in the ESAF ballooned with American assistance, which offers lessons for future advisors working with foreign militaries needing to develop initiative at lower echelons. The cultural context will dictate how appropriately NCOs, officers, or warrant officers can fit into a foreign military's rank structure.

Language barriers were also an impediment to absorption that was eventually overcome, but could have been better accounted for at the outset. In one example, helicopter crews training at Fort Rucker, Alabama, were first required to attend an English language course in Texas which took six precious months. The US Army eventually remedied the situation by training the pilots with Spanish-speaking US Army instructors.³⁹ There is no apparent reason

³⁵ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 28.

³⁶ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 28

³⁷ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 47.

³⁸ Waghelstein, interviewed by the author, 21 March 2013.

³⁹ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 15.

why this could not have been instituted earlier. Effectively advising through interpreters is certainly possible, but Spanish skills are typically demanded in the SOUTCOM AOR. The availability of Spanish speakers in the US military should make meeting this requirement simple, though it seemed prohibitively difficult to obtain bilingual advisors early in the intervention.

Finally, civil engineering projects combined to make a successfully-absorbed category of assistance that has been noted by numerous observers.⁴⁰ Headquarters and training facilities were designed to put joint leaders into the same location, and many or still in use today. One influential study, conducted by four US Army officers at Tufts University Fletcher School in 1988, noted, “Nowhere does American assistance translate more directly into tangible and genuinely usable results than in building things.”⁴¹

The Absorption of Consideration for Human Rights

The ESAF could absorb population-centric lessons in counterinsurgency, and reform its appreciation for human rights, when the operational benefits were clearly demonstrated. Nonetheless, there were limits to how thoroughly this could occur. One positive example that took advantage of the power of perceived operational benefits was a film produced by SOUTHCOM called *Dos Patrullas* (Two Patrols). The film documented the activities of two ESAF patrols operating against the FMLN in the countryside. One took the long-esteemed Salvadoran approach of brutalizing civilians suspected of supporting the insurgents while the other sought grass-roots support in a population-centric approach. Clear differences in the intelligence provided to the latter were made demonstrably clear to ESAF infantrymen.⁴² Waghlestein summarized that, “The Salvadoran military understood they weren’t supposed to violate human rights, but they believed they were driven to extreme measures by extreme circumstances. When you could convince them in an operational context why

⁴⁰ Ramsey, “Advising Indigenous Forces,” 100, and Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 29.

⁴¹ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 29. This report is unofficially referred to as the “Four Colonels Report” by individuals involved in the El Salvador mission. The report is viewed as being critical of the mission and America’s ability to conduct counterinsurgency, but for making some useful criticism as well. For example see Waghelstein, 23.

⁴² Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 9.

human rights made sense, you started to get their attention. When the Salvadorans started to see, 'that if you don't shoot civilians, we'll get their support, and therefore be able to root out the guerillas,' then they saw human rights from a pragmatic perspective."⁴³

US assistance had a positive effect on the human rights situation in El Salvador. In 1993, an independent UN Commission examined serious acts of violence attributed to the ESAF during the conflict. The report demonstrated that between 1980 and 1990 serious acts of violence had declined from 1,196 per 1,000 soldiers to 45 per 1,000 soldiers. Put another way, monthly averages for political murders fell from a peak of 610 in 1980 to just 23 in 1987.⁴⁴ This 2,600 percent decrease has been ascribed in part to the use of US assistance as leverage and training in counterinsurgency.⁴⁵ Advisors worked hard with significant monetary resources to affect change, and time made the leverage at their disposal more effective.

Absorption and Leverage

Leverage had been a goal of US officials since the earliest days of intervention. Even the first small investments during the Carter Administration were made to give the US Embassy in San Salvador leverage over their client. One Carter Administration official averred, "What we have to do is wean the military off the teat of the oligarchy and onto ours."⁴⁶ Colonel Stringham emphasized the usefulness of the engagement's small size when it came to affecting human rights reform, noting:

I had the occasion more than once after the Rangers went into Grenada to tell the Salvadorans not to look for US intervention. Many ESAF officials thought the US action in Grenada was wonderful especially since the invasion happened during the dark days of October in El Salvador. A very thinly veiled agenda from some elements of the ESAF leadership was a scenario which would have the Rangers coming next to El Salvador to support the MilGrp [sic]. My reply to this scenario was that El Salvador was capable of winning its own war and any Rangers other than myself

⁴³ Colonel J.S. Roach, quoted in Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 26.

⁴⁴ Paul Cale, United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992", 23.

⁴⁵ UN report quoted in Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 29.

⁴⁶ Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 133f.

that came would be coming to take out Americans, should the situation dictate.⁴⁷

Leverage could have been better if security assistance laws had given advisors more control over the funds. Once Congress appropriated security assistance funds, they became the ESAF's to spend, in accordance with some stipulations.⁴⁸ Security assistance laws gave too little control for US decision makers to use aid in a manner truly reflective of US policy. Some credits were transferred to the ESAF without caveat often resulting in wasteful purchases. One example was a purchase of non-US radios that did not have Spanish-language manuals. US advisors could be of no assistance in determining how to use them.⁴⁹

Material or monetary aid may actually serve as a hindrance to mission accomplishment when those receiving it realize that victory will mean that it is no longer provided. The authors of the "Four Colonels Report" recognized that, "If one is looking for reasons why counterinsurgency proved so difficult in El Salvador, part of the answer lies in this unintended effect of US assistance, which gave the Salvadoran Armed Forces an interest in prolonging rather than terminating the war."⁵⁰ Bacevich observed that leverage only tended to work when "blunt, heavy tools" of negotiating were employed.⁵¹ Vice President Bush's dinnertime toast offered one example of one such blunt, heavy tool.

Leverage was quite effective though when it was "blunt and heavy." In one case the son of a retired national guardsman was arbitrarily arrested along with some friends by an ESAF intelligence unit that was operating out of uniform. The guardsman recognized one of the officers and reported him to the US Embassy. The MILGROUP Commander went immediately to the ESAF Chief of Staff and offered a clear ultimatum: Release the youths immediately, end all clandestine law enforcement operations, and disband the offending unit and reassign its members. The demands were complied with once it was made clear

⁴⁷ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 90-91.

⁴⁸ Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" 28.

⁴⁹ Bacevich *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 14.

⁵⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 100.

⁵¹ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 25.

that several multi-million dollar projects would be revoked.⁵² Despite American interest in the ESAF's success, some aid was easily revocable. Colonel Waghelstein explained a conversation with the ESAF Chief of Staff over beverages, "I told Vides in my best Spanish that unlike Vietnam where we had 450,000 troops, it would not take me long to have 55 trainers on a single aircraft and out of his country."⁵³ The ESAF was subjected to the US advisors' leverage, and America continued its involvement until the point of negotiated settlement in 1992 based on significant perceived interests in the region.

Interests and Costs

US statesmen were concerned about increasing communist access to locations near the American homeland. The Kissinger Commission Report on policy in Central America proclaimed, "We have stressed before, and we repeat here: indigenous reform movements, even indigenous revolutions, are not themselves a security concern for the United States." The report goes on to emphasize that the main concern in El Salvador was outside sponsorship and the FMLN's stated desire to establish a communist state allied to Cuba, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ The commission demonstrated serious concerns over a Central American domino effect. Cuba and Nicaragua were bastions of communism and leftist movements were active in numerous countries in the SOUTHCOM area of reference. Moreover, The FMLN was inspired by the Sandinistas and supplied by them along with other leftist allies. It was reasonable to believe that an FMLN victory would give a boost to the morale of other leftist movements in the region.

El Salvador's extrinsic value was noteworthy based on its proximity to the United States and access to the Pacific Ocean. Neighboring Nicaragua had few naval facilities, but one Foreign Service officer projected that El Salvador could have provided the Soviet Navy with more suitable access to the Eastern Pacific. A port in the eastern Pacific could lengthen the time that nuclear-missile submarines could operate without resurfacing and provide

⁵² Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 24.

⁵³ Waghelstein, interviewed by the author, April 2013.

⁵⁴ Kissinger Report, quoted in Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 264.

unprecedented Eastern Pacific access to smaller hunter-killer submarines.⁵⁵ Freedom of American shipping was a critical assumption for American contingency plans in a number of theaters. A Communist-controlled port in El Salvador could seriously challenge America's freedom to mobilize for an East Asian contingency involving China or the USSR. While this may sound like a loose connection, it should be recalled that in early 1942 German submarines sunk hundreds of American ships near the American East Coast and in the Caribbean. In May 1942 alone 108 supply ships were sunk.⁵⁶

In terms of cost, El Salvador was one of the top recipients of American aid in the 1980s, peaking at \$204 million in 1984.⁵⁷ The "Four Colonels Report" compared this to the amount received by the largest recipients, Egypt and Israel, who were receiving \$1.3 Billion.⁵⁸ Military aid totaled at \$1.2 Billion from 1980-1992 while there was \$4 Billion in other economic aid and \$500 Million dedicated to Central Intelligence Programs.⁵⁹ Military aid helped fund the ESAF's massive growth from 10,000 to 70,000 and also went to some unique programs, such as a weapon buy-back program similar to the one instituted in the anti-Huk campaign.⁶⁰ Figure 7.1 below shows the growth of this number, which became significantly larger than the budget for OEF-P or the Georgia Train and Equip Program, but smaller than Plan Colombia or aid to Pakistan. The number is very small when compared to Vietnam or Iraq, but significant when considered in light of El Salvador's small population or gross national product. So, one observer's conclusion that "El Salvador was a long, financially costly affair" is a matter of perspective.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 25-26.

⁵⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 25-27.

⁵⁷ Quantities used in this paragraph are based on 1984 dollars, and have not been corrected for inflation.

⁵⁸ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 9.

⁵⁹ Military and economic aid numbers from Vick, 91. CIA number from Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, x.

⁶⁰ Much like the controversial program to feed Filipino troops, American aid offset expenditures for a fiscally-beleaguered ESAF. This allowed the GoES to concentrate its own expenditures in other areas, and some creative counterinsurgency programs. LTC Cruz in Morazan instituted a successful weapons buy-back program. Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 66.

⁶¹ Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 103.

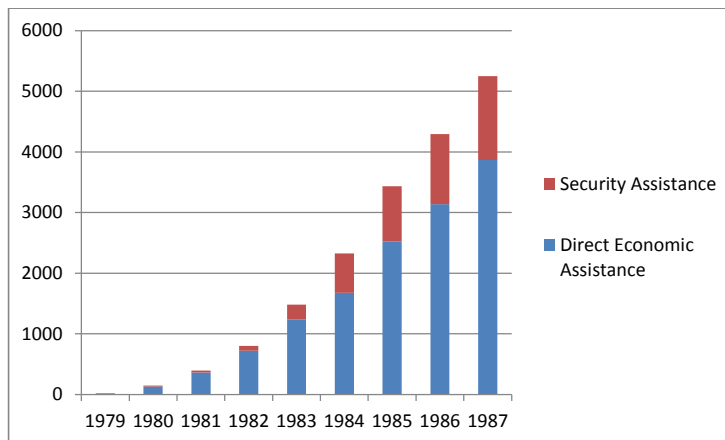


Figure 14: US Aid to El Salvador, 1980-1987

Source: Author's original work. Values from Bacevich, et. al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*

The cost in terms of deployed service personnel was minuscule. The 55-man MILGROUP necessarily included administrative and support personnel that were not technically trainers. Those counting against the 55 were eventually interpreted as those who actually trained ESAF forces. The limit excluded uniformed medical trainers, who numbered 26 at one point.⁶² Thus, by 1984 there were over 100 American military personnel in El Salvador, and the number reached around 150 by 1987.⁶³ The “real limit” for total personnel in country including trainers, medical advisors, and administrative personnel was said to be 125 in 1990.⁶⁴

The contingent's small force size was designed to minimize risk to Americans, but there were some occasions when trainers admittedly found themselves in combat situations. One OPATT member explained that ESAF soldiers referred to them as “asesor.” This Spanish word's use translated more closely to the doctrinal US understanding of an “advisor,” who not only trains

⁶² Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 92.

⁶³ Paul P. Cale, “The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992” (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 13.

⁶⁴ Cale, “The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992,” 2.

but advises on combat operations.⁶⁵ But conversely, a common ESAF joke supposedly defined “*asesor*” as “one who tries to tell us how to run a war without ever having been there.”⁶⁶ Still, advisors found themselves in harm’s way repeatedly. In one such case, Colonel Stringham had travelled to Cacahuatique to observe an ESAF position when his helicopter had to make a contested landing and could not egress from the position, where friendly troops were in a close fight with FMLN guerrillas.⁶⁷ Colonel Stringham admiringly explained how Ambassador Pickering dealt with media accusations that the War Powers Resolution was being violated any time it was discovered that Americans were in combat situations. Stringham said, “...The Ambassador strongly believed we couldn’t do the job if we didn’t go out, while complying in spirit and letter to the Resolution, which we always started out to do and usually accomplished.”⁶⁸

More was ultimately achieved with less in the case of El Salvador. The number of 55 advisors was determined arbitrarily and it would have been preferable for that number to be slightly higher. Waghelstein notes, “Reasons for criticizing this arbitrary limit are legion, but there were a number of benefits that accrued as a result, ones that may have outweighed the negatives.”⁶⁹

Final Assessment

Many commentators continued to see the war in El Salvador through the lens of Vietnam, clinging to feeble comparisons even as that analogy became more inappropriate with time. Journalist Saul Landau, for example, likened the two conflicts because US advisors trained the ESAF in “guerrilla tactics.”⁷⁰ Landau suggested that “guerrilla” tactics necessarily lead to a losing fight for the US. Vietnam was a guerrilla war, after all. Landau also claimed that the US advisors’ emphasis on “hearts and minds” was nothing but a “public relations gimmick” leveraged by a force that watched ESAF personnel torture

⁶⁵ Ronald B. Walters, “The Marine Officer and a Little War,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (December, 1986), 54. Quoted in Ramsey, “Advising Indigenous Forces,” 88.

⁶⁶ Cecil E. Bailey, “OPATT: The US Army SF Advisers in El Salvador,” *Special Warfare* (December 1986), 20. Quoted in Ramsey, “Advising Indigenous Forces,” 96.

⁶⁷ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 18-19.

⁶⁸ Stringham, Interview by Colonel Charles Carlton, 12.

⁶⁹ Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 22.

⁷⁰ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 9.

prisoners⁷¹ The evidence used to support this accusation was the testimony of an unnamed New York Times reporter. Military personnel were also skeptical, including the authors of the “Four Colonels Report,” despite conducting some valuable research, were not immune. The report suggested that Americans proved inept at understanding counterinsurgency in Vietnam, and that El Salvador was beyond reform. Conversely, Major Paul P. Cale astutely pointed out the inappropriateness of the Vietnam comparison, noting that for every US military trainer in El Salvador, there were nearly 10,000 soldiers in Vietnam.⁷²

Another important difference from Vietnam was that a degree of the liberalization and democratization urged by American statesmen and advisors did take hold in El Salvador. Strategists who may cynically react against any mention of democratization in the aftermath of frustrations in Iraq and Afghanistan should keep this in mind. It is worth noting that El Salvador was an especially corrupt society that would not seem ripe for political change, though it occurred nonetheless.

Objectives for both the state and the insurgent often change during the course of an irregular war and El Salvador was no exception. There would be few instances of success if the measure of achievement were tied rigidly to the objectives established at conflict’s outset. The aims of the Reagan and Bush Administrations became not a “decisive victory,” but rather the prevention of a pro-Soviet dictatorship in El Salvador. Such dictatorships, so close to the American mainland, had often been the source of more problematic affairs.⁷³ Interventions in the region had included major military deployments, such as the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Grenada in 1983. One small communist Caribbean state also played the central role in the tensest moment in the nation’s history: the 1962 Missile Crisis in Cuba.

American assistance has been widely acknowledged as an essential factor in keeping the FMLN from taking El Salvador. Max Manwaring and Court Prisk conclude, “External aid was admittedly inconsistent and not as effective as it might have been, but it made the difference between defeat and

⁷¹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America*, 106.

⁷² Cale, “The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992,” 14.

⁷³ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, 272.

survival.”⁷⁴ President Álvaro Magaña emphasized, “I can say it over and over again—that the attitude of the US government during my tenure as interim President, was what definitely saved this country.”⁷⁵ The importance of American support is unanimous. The significance of that support is well-expressed by one US advisor, who remarked, “El Salvador has done two things at the same time which are generally mutually exclusive: Fostered democracy while countering an insurgency.”⁷⁶

The importance of US aid was also voiced by the insurgents themselves. One frustrated FMLN commander who saw trouble coming for his cause when the US intervened commented to a Mexican newspaper reporter in 1981 that, “The point is that the ‘Salvadoran’ Army is no longer capable of directing the war... it leaves imperialism with no option other than intervention... So imperialism converts the ‘Salvadoran’ Army into a puppet army whose reins are held outside of the country... in the United States.”⁷⁷ The FMLN leadership signaled the effects of US FID, pleading, “The FMLN once again emphasizes the necessity for international solidarity from all countries to stop direct military intervention of imperialism in our territory.”⁷⁸

Despite the disproportionate impact of American FID efforts, including advisors, equipment, and other forms of aid, it is important to acknowledge the mission’s imperfections. The mission in El Salvador was a success, but not in an unqualified way. Schwarz observes that El Salvador was “... not a situation for the US to congratulate itself [about], since such a settlement was anathema to the architects of US policy towards El Salvador in the early 1980s.”⁷⁹ Schwarz’s agenda is decidedly anti-interventionist, but even the more balanced by Greentree concludes, “If the American experience in Central America can be considered a qualified success, it was hardly a celebration of victory, and it also

⁷⁴ Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 231.

⁷⁵ Interim President Dr Álvaro Magaña, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 238.

⁷⁶ Joe Andrade, “El Salvador: One Soldier’s Perspective”, Presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012., 20.

⁷⁷ Ferman Cienfuegos, FMLN sub-group (FARN) leader, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 110.

⁷⁸ Salvador Cayetano Carpio, in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 393.

⁷⁹ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, xii.

bears a cautionary tale about the limits of power and the extraordinary costs of war, even small wars.”⁸⁰

Advisors would have a hard time selling the idea of a FID campaign geared at assisting a force like the ESAF in the contemporary setting. New legal prohibitions on training and equipping foreign military units with known human rights abuses would be prohibitive. The Leahy Amendment, enacted in 1997, requires that units receiving US training, education, and equipment are approved in a human rights vetting process. New prohibitions have resulted in the withdrawal of US aid and advisors from a number of countries that have committed human rights violations were far surpassed by the ESAF during the 1980s.⁸¹

Despite these important observations regarding El Salvador’s limitations as a model, the intervention holds valuable future lessons for small-scale FID, particularly in the area of leverage. Much like the 55-trainer limit, the vociferous opposition to the mission in Congress was paradoxically beneficial to the advisors on the ground in terms of leverage in latitude. Speaking of that opposition, Waghelstein notes that, “Not all this was bad, although Congressional opponents of our policy probably didn’t see the subtlety, as it increased our leverage with our client.”⁸² Tension in Washington over the intervention made threats of withdrawn support aimed at deterring abuse more credible to ESAF leadership.

Ambassador Thomas Pickering, a legendary statesman, gave the best retrospective summary of the small-scale FID approach: “It was an interesting model. We almost backed into it. I wouldn’t say that it’s the tried and true formula for dealing with every problem. You have to be careful. But in the long run, it proves the general maxim that a lot of us who have dealt with these kinds of problems in the past. If you can stay lean, trim, and mean for a very long period of time and keep the lid on the personnel bloat, you can win or at

⁸⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention*, 1.

⁸¹ A specific prohibition pertinent to this topic is known as the “Leahy Amendment,” which requires State Department vetting for foreign units receiving US training and assistance.

⁸² Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” 22.

least hold your own.”⁸³ Ambassador Pickering’s observation, considered 25 years later, is backed by some empirical evidence. The Rand study discussed in Chapter Two suggested that small interventions seldom led to victories, but contrarily avoided defeat. The ESAF held its own with the aid of American advisors, and at the cost of 21 deaths, a number that occurred almost every single day in Vietnam or Iraq at the height of US involvement.

⁸³ Ambassador Thomas Pickering in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 406-407.

CHAPTER 8

Small-Scale Foreign Internal Defense of the Past and Future:

Conclusions and Recommendations

We've got to learn a method that will permit us to take our hands off or suffer the consequences of having our presence there as inherent: as generating and escalating a simple insurgency into something more than that. This is one of the real lessons of Vietnam.

—Major General Edward G. Lansdale
April 1971 Interview

Their vision stops where it begins to change their lifestyle.

—Anonymous American Advisor in El Salvador, 1987

This study introduced the concept of small-scale foreign internal defense (FID) as an affordable and potentially effective way for the US to deal with irregular threats in times of looming fiscal scarcity. The most successful American interventions in irregular wars have not been those with the highest budgets or largest commitments of force. Relatively small advisory missions to the Philippines, Greece, El Salvador, Colombia, and the Republic of Georgia put partner nation (PN) militaries in the lead. Those fights were the PN's to win or lose. These missions took advantage of contexts that favored small-scale FID, and it must be noted that not all future irregular wars will be as ripe for this mode of employment.

The framework developed in Chapter Two highlights reasons for and against intervention, and identifies variables that can enhance the chances for success in small-scale FID. The framework used the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic value to explain why the internal security of small states might be important to securing American interests. Small states will have differing degrees of absorptive capacity, or readiness to accept and employ the assistance that the US is able to provide. The provision of this aid can be enhanced through a proper consideration of the three key FID planning considerations of *sustainment*, *organizational socialization*, and *capabilities integration*. These concepts of small-state value, absorptive capacity and three key FID

considerations comprised a framework used to evaluate the Hukbalahap and El Salvador case studies.

Our analysis has demonstrated that the successful anti-Hukbalahap campaign benefited from the confluence of conditions favorable to small-scale FID. The prevailing view of the anti-Huk campaign holds that a few brilliant American advisors conspired with the gifted Filipino President Ramón Magsaysay to win a war that was all but lost in the late 1940s. That view is correct to a degree, but it overstates the impact of a few individuals at the expense of broader efforts and contextual factors that shaped the outcome. For this reason, the prevailing view misses several factors that were instrumental to US and Filipino success. First, while the monetary commitment on the American part was relatively small, it was not insubstantial and was bolstered by a tremendous stock of World War II surplus materials. Second, the presence of US forces at Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay naval facilities both stimulated the local economy and deterred the Huks in ways that may not be replicated in future scenarios. Additionally, small-scale FID had benefits specific to the unique fact that the Philippines had been a US commonwealth for nearly five decades and had an English-speaking officer corps trained and organized along American lines. Finally, it is important to recognize that in the canon of Hukbalahap Insurrection literature, very little is recorded about the actual fighting. Declassified mission reports and oral histories describe an insurgency of much lower intensity than the civil wars with which most Americans are familiar.

Regarding the creative practices enacted by Magsaysay and Lansdale, one historian concludes that “...such innovation and support appear to have derived more from the low overall military priorities for the Philippines, which took a position behind Europe, than from conscious individual actions by American advisers.”¹ This is partially correct. Scant attention from authorities unfamiliar with the situation allowed mature advisors with an understanding of the local situation to act adaptively. But the advisors did not have to be as innovative as they were, and most were not prior to 1950. In fact, they were not

¹ LTC Robert Frank, quoted in Maj Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines – 1946-1955* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), vi.

so innovative during the campaign's first four dreadful years. In the end, Lansdale makes the most apt observation: "We [must] give all credit to the Filipinos... It is their right. They are the ones risking their lives."² Thousands of Filipinos sacrificed for their new republic while not a single American perished. To call this an "American" victory may have been pretentious and even offensive to Filipinos. Despite US assistance, the anti-Huk campaign was an operation overwhelmingly conducted by PN soldiers through sacrifices of their own, and not a single American died in battle.³ This, of course, is the intent of small-scale FID.

This text's review of El Salvador's civil war demonstrated that most of the literature covering that topic falls into two camps. One focuses on human rights abuses without acknowledging how US aid helped change that condition. Another recalls the campaign as an unqualified success without due regard to what the advisory mission was unable to do. The El Salvador case demonstrated that a mission can be highly controversial even when an intervention is very small. Nonetheless, it shows that a mission's very smallness may allow for US engagement to endure even when an advisory mission is publically controversial. The astronomical expansion of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) through US funding and training is captured by metrics that fail to depict aspects of ESAF culture that advisors were unable to change. Advisors had very limited means to influence a corrupt promotion system, and a fixation on heavy-handed tactics. The human rights situation improved considerably, but the retributions during the second "Final Offensive" demonstrated that ESAF's ability to reform had limitations. Radical reformation of the ESAF would have been a pretentious endeavor, a fact that most of the astute MILGROUP advisors recognized.

El Salvador was compared to Vietnam in many inappropriate ways. For example, some authors recall Colonel Harry Summers' famous conversation with North Vietnamese Army Colonel Tu in which the former said, "You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield." To this, Tu replied, "That is true, but

² Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Washington, DC: Brasseys, 1998), 91.

³ Several died as the result of violent crime and one was murdered by an AFP supply-specialist while trying to investigate the disappearance of some US-supplied jeeps.

it is also irrelevant.”⁴ Colonel Tu’s point can be compared to James Corum and Wray Johnson’s observation on the war in El Salvador:

Some of the American commentators would complain that the military strategy had failed and that the Salvadoran forces were never able to defeat the FMLN on the battlefield. This might be true, but in retrospect, the program of military aid was a genuine success for the United States. The primary objective of keeping El Salvador from becoming a communist state was realized... The peace accord may have been a compromise, but it was recognized as fair by both sides and provides a solid basis for peacefully developing El Salvador—a favorable peace is, after all, the primary objective in waging war.⁵

El Salvador was no Vietnam, despite what many observers insisted before, during, and after the conflict. It may not be a perfect model for future small-scale FID missions, but recognition of its many lessons will aid strategists in ensuring that the next interventions are not “Iraqs” either. A series of lessons, conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the analysis of the Hukbalahap and El Salvador case studies.

Nine Lessons, Conclusions, and Recommendations

1. Small-scale FID is not a panacea and will not work in every situation.

The Hukbalahap and the FMLN were formidable enemies, but an intervention as small as the American missions to the Philippines or El Salvador may not work against a more robust insurgency. The Hukbalahap included roughly 10,000 hard-core fighters while the number for the FMLN was approximately 14,000. By comparison, the regional guerrillas in Vietnam were estimated to consist of 80,000 hard-core fighters in 1965. When combined with main force army and the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN), the overall number of fighters totaled over 600,000, and a number of these had decades of experience fighting the French and Japanese.⁶ Ongoing situations in Pakistan and Mali

⁴ Colonel Harry Summers quoted in Colonel Charles D. Allen, “The Impact of a Decade at War,” *Armed Forces Journal*, www.armedforcesjournal.com/2011/05/6151470/ (accessed 22 May 2013).

⁵ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 341.

⁶ Department of the Army, *The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy*, Department of the Army Pamphlet, no. 550-106 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1966), 117-119.

demonstrate that strategists' expectations should be low when conditions are not favorable for small-scale FID. Serious policy disagreements between the US and Pakistan and the importance of the latter not appearing to be a puppet of the former has seriously influenced FID mission there. Despite massive infusions of aid, the willingness and ability of the Pakistan Army to do US bidding has always been tenuous. Mali has a similarly weak tradition of central government. Weakness coupled with the sheer difficulty for a poor state to control massive swaths of inaccessible territory made small-scale FID especially difficult there.⁷

2. The assertion that FID, SA, or BPC “do not work” is false. There is skepticism about these “indirect” approaches within certain parts of the special operations forces (SOF) community. Indicative of this, the US Special Operations Command 2013 research topics include one recommend research topic entitled, “*Building partnership capacity: Myth or reality?*” The SOCOM pamphlet expands on the topic, “The notion behind the concept of building partnership capacity revolves around the assumption that the U.S., as a benevolent (and concerned) third-party, can use military forces and expertise to fundamentally change or improve the capacity of other nations’ security organizations.”⁸ The skepticism has emerged recently in Air Force Special Operations Command in discussions over the “re-missioning” of the only aviation FID unit, the 6th Special Operations Squadron. Skepticism about FID was voiced in mantras within the SOF community that can be stated as, “special operations are about killing people, not helping people,” and “FID has no metrics to empirically prove that it works.” Contrary to such anti-FID mantras, the missions in the Philippines and El Salvador achieved continuing advantage for the United States, despite this study’s occasional emphasis on the unique conditions that made those interventions difficult to replicate. The costs, particularly in terms of American manpower and loss of life, were miniscule. The growth of the AFP and ESAF and the improvement of their

⁷ These observations are based on a conversation with Dr James Kiras, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS).

⁸ Joint Special Operations University, “USSOCOM Research Topics 2013,” 13. Available at https://jsou.socom.mil/Documents/2013_USSOCOM_ResearchTopics_071612_Final.pdf (accesses 22 May 2013).

capabilities would not have occurred without US assistance and training, and there are metrics to support that.⁹

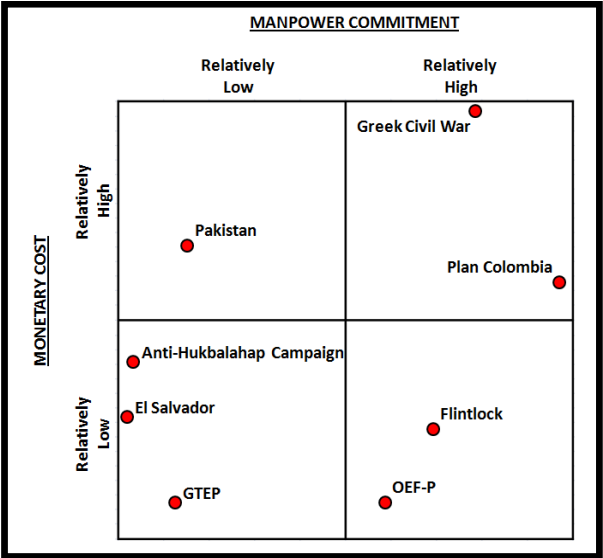
3. Mythologies are valuable for organizational reasons, but should not be allowed to impede more objective historical investigation or strategic analysis.

The bulk of published history of US assistance during the Hukbalahap Insurrection centers on the fascinating story of Edward Lansdale and his relationship with Philippine President Ramón Magsaysay. That story is essential to understanding the conflict, but fixation on it comes at the expense of other aspects of the campaign. Similarly, critics of the US mission in El Salvador focus almost exclusively on human rights abuses; but American strategists and practitioners of FID should be more concerned with overemphasis on the mission's successes. Those successes were notable and are highlighted in dozens of books and papers, many written to fulfill graduation requirements of the Naval Post Graduate School's outstanding Irregular Warfare program. Highlighting this success is necessary because the mission is virtually unknown within the US military outside of a few small communities of special operators. But those communities should also focus on the challenges and limitations observed in the campaign, for while the mission was a success, it was not perfect. Small-scale FID strategy will be best served by codifying best practices, but also acknowledging what small-scale FID cannot be expected to accomplish.

4. Small-scale FID is sufficiently different from large-scale counterinsurgency to warrant a separate category; however, there is no template for the mission, only a handful of principles. No specific number of advisors, magnitude of budget, or ratio of any sort defines small-scale FID. Both the mission in the Philippines and El Salvador were small enough to avoid public impatience with protraction so common in irregular warfare—but exactly what “small enough” means cannot be captured numerically. It is worth recalling the chart comparing some of these missions, originally presented in chapter 2.

⁹ Nevertheless, metrics alone are *not* a sufficient basis for assessing mission effectiveness.

Table 9: Relative Costs and Manning Commitments of Small-Scale FID Missions



Source: Author's Original Work

One curious aspect reflected in this chart is that none of the missions fall near the center of the grid. In other words, when compared to one and other, there have been no medium-cost/medium-manning small-scale FID missions. The sample size is admittedly small. Nevertheless, what this indicates is that once strategists have decided to use a small-scale FID approach, history provides examples that balance cost and manning much differently. In the fiscally-austere future, several hundred advisors, or more, may be employed to conduct low-cost training and advising when high infusions of materiel are not affordable or necessary.

5. Small-scale FID can paradoxically take advantage of the same modern media environment that plays to an insurgent's advantage during larger operations. Assistance to El Salvador was significantly less popular than aid to the Philippines, but in both cases the smallness of the intervention meant that other issues would overshadow them in the news. Neither the anti-Huk campaign nor the El Salvador intervention was terminated for reasons of American public exhaustion. Similarly, not only is the success of the ongoing

OEF-P unclassified, the SOF community has publicized its successes in a limited way. Still, OEF-P is virtually unknown. These interventions often seem to be too small to merit the sort of media attention that can derail them, even when they are highly unpopular, as was the case with El Salvador.¹⁰

6. The challenges and disappointments that have characterized democratization in Iraq and Afghanistan should serve as a warning against overly-ambitious strategy, but do not indicate that democratization is always foolhardy. Democratization had positive effects in both the Philippines and El Salvador. The fair election of popular governments deprived the insurgencies' of the ability to offer an alternative to illegitimate governance. Democratic regimes fared better in terms of recognizing basic human rights in the aftermath of both cases. American relations with the Philippines remained positive for the next five decades and only became problematic when the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship alienated the people with increasing severity in the 1980s. El Salvador has remained an important partner to the US, even sending a battalion of forces to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The current democratically-elected president of El Salvador is a member of the FMLN, which is now a legitimate political party in the country. Colonel John Waghelstein makes the common-sense observation that, "If the host government was clearly democratic and unambiguously supportive of human rights they probably would not need our help in the first place."¹¹ Policymakers concerned with human rights abuses by prospective PNs should take this to heart. Guidelines should be set to limit which militaries the United States will

¹⁰ President Ronald Reagan's first major press interview was with Walter Cronkite in March of 1981. El Salvador was the main topic of discussion. Reagan replied to questions insinuating that El Salvador would be "another Vietnam," with the following statement: "You used the term military advisors. You know, there's a sort of a technicality there. You could say they are advisors in that they're training, but when it's used as advisor, that means military men who go and accompany the forces into combat, advise on strategy and tactics. We have no one of that kind... And as a matter of fact, we have training teams in more than 30 countries today, and we have always done that." Very-small-scale FID consisting of single or a few mobile training teams in individual countries worldwide warrants further study. Reagan quote above was from, Paul P. Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992" (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 11.

¹¹ Waghelstein, "Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case," 32.

support, but not in a manner that is so restrictive as to proscribe relations with any military with abuse on its record. The US may actually miss opportunities to save innocent lives by quarantining itself from unsavory partner militaries.

7. Security assistance must be understood not only in terms of the capacity it can build, but also the leverage that it provides for the US government. Advisors effectively used security assistance as leverage in the Philippines and El Salvador, but there were limitations to what they could expect to change. A number of scholars have recognized this and made conclusions that relate leverage to the interests of both the US and PN. ESAF officers concluded that American interest was high early in that conflict when the Reagan Administration would not withdraw aid. The ESAF officers were therefore invulnerable to leverage until bold pronouncements were made by Vice President George H.W. Bush and MILGROUP Commanders. Rand analyst Benjamin Schwarz concluded, “This indicates that the greater US interests, the lower the likelihood that aid will be able to reform foreign militaries from their old ways.” Similarly, Tyler Groh suggested that for an intervening state to succeed with an indirect approach, “... a proxy force should have more at stake in the accomplishment of its sponsor’s political objectives to keep it from pursuing divergent objectives. This suggests that the more a proxy force has at stake, the more dependable it becomes.”¹² That statement dovetails with a 2012 Rand Study’s suggestion that “minimalist intervention” works best in cases when US interests are low, and with Hy Rothstein’s assertion that, “US success against irregular threats is inversely related to the priority senior US officials (civilian and military) attach to the effort.”¹³ These somewhat-paradoxical observations lend to a model for understanding the potential for leverage under various conditions of interest (Reference Table 8.2). This model can be used to consider several of the small-scale FID missions discussed in this study (Reference Table 8.3).

¹² Maj Ty L. Groh, “An Unwholly Trinity: The Challenges of Proxy Warfare” (master’s thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2007).

¹³ Hy S. Rothstein, “Less is More: The Problematic Future of Irregular Warfare in an Era of Collapsing States,” *Third World Quarterly* (Vol. 28, No. 2, 2007), 292.

Table 10: Interest-Leverage Conditions

		PARTNER NATION	
		LOW INTEREST	HIGH INTEREST
SPONSOR NATION	HIGH INTEREST	Low-leverage condition. High amounts of aid will be necessary to secure acquiescence on comparatively minor issues.	High-leverage condition. Sponsor state and PN objectives are likely to converge and a near-equal payoff will result from security assistance leverage
	LOW INTEREST	Very low-leverage condition. Military-to-military relations will be geared primarily at contingency preparation and routine exercises.	Very-high leverage condition. Easy for sponsor to revoke aid And difficult for PN to resist demands associated with it.

Source: Author's original work.

Table 11: Interest-Leverage Classifications of Small-Scale FID Campaigns

		PARTNER NATION	
		LOW INTEREST	HIGH INTEREST
SPONSOR NATION	HIGH INTEREST	Low Leverage Pakistan	High Leverage Philippines (Huk)
	LOW INTEREST	Very-low Leverage El Salvador Mali Most routine JCETs, IMET, And bilateral exercises	Very-high Leverage Georgia Colombia Philippines (OEF-P)

Source: Author's original work.

8. Each military service must track personnel who have displayed

extraordinary competence as advisors. Both case studies illuminated the highly disproportionate effect that a single advisor of uncommon talent can have. Numerous MILGROUP Commanders and flag officers highlighted a single advisor named Master Sergeant Bruce Hazelwood who oversaw the establishment of Salvadoran civil defense units. They credited him with single-handedly making this program a success through socially-agile advising, adaptability, and superior instructional skills.¹⁴ Most advisors with years of experience will attest that there are a small number of people who have a certain extraordinary gift for relating to foreign counterparts and influencing them. Lansdale was clearly one of these specimens. Lansdale himself declared in a 1969 interview that, “The quality of personnel in an advisory program, not its size, procedures or equipment, is crucial to the success of the program: the right man must be in the right spot.”¹⁵ Lansdale later described his participation in a Pentagon focus group chartered with building a list of such individuals from all services. The list included only 20 names.¹⁶ The number of personnel necessary to interact at lower levels within foreign militaries is certainly larger than twenty, but only the Army has a system for tracking advisors. Colonel Waghelstein observed that, “We don’t really effectively train our officer corps in this environment. Only those few mavericks who insist on going to the sound of guns that aren’t Russian (at least directly) are really qualified to deal with those kinds of problems, and their the exception to the rule.”¹⁷ The Air Force’s 6th Special Operations Squadron, and the demobilizing of ad hoc general purpose force advisory squadrons, returns advisors back to their respective career fields with no way of tracking them. If the Air Force is serious about building partner capacity and foreign internal defense, it should

¹⁴ Colonel John Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observations – The El Salvador Case,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 40.

¹⁵ Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interviewed by Major Alnwick, 25 April 1971, United States Air Force Oral History Interview K239.0512-768, Corona Harvest #0560786., 1.

¹⁶ Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interviewed by Major Alnwick, 25 April 1971, United States Air Force Oral History Interview K239.0512-768, Corona Harvest #0560786., 19-20.

¹⁷ Waghelstein in Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1988) Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 405.

make modest changes to the personnel system to track these individuals. On a broader level, the DoD should staff and equip more adequately for these advisory missions. A Congressional Research Service analyst recently noted the deficiency in an April 2013 report: “The ‘indirect approach’ has not been prioritized, and the orchestration of special operations capabilities in sustained efforts remains the most serious operational deficit.”¹⁸

9. US military personnel assigned to embassies, geographic combatant commands, theater special operations commands and organizations responsible for international affairs must be prepared with a nuanced understanding of irregular warfare. Uniformed personnel in the earliest days of both case studies focused on bolstering conventional capabilities for partner militaries that were already too conventional in their approach. American personnel simply imparted what they knew best, and their conventionally-minded partners were more than happy to accept the gratuitous but inappropriate assistance. The two trends of increasing sub-state warfare and the American desire for allies to share burdens has important implications. More officers in the aforementioned posts will be put into positions demanding a nuanced understanding of irregular warfare that surpasses their familiarity with the large-scale campaigns of Iraq and Afghanistan. Professional military education (PME) is one low-cost way to maintain competence and interest institutionally in irregular warfare. Walking away from the past decade of experience in irregular warfare in PME as the Army and Air Force did after Vietnam would be a major mistake. Only by acknowledging the challenges and limitations of irregular warfare, through study and discussion, can future planners and strategists avoid overreactions and properly scale affordable and effective responses.

Final Thoughts

The case studies in this thesis make clear that small-scale FID emerged accidentally, as the result of strategic compromise, in both the Philippines and El Salvador. The sizes and scopes of FID efforts in these countries were the product of global circumstances, commitment of forces elsewhere, and the

¹⁸ Linda Robinson, *The Future of US Special Operations Forces*, Council on Foreign Relations Special Report Number 66 (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013), 4.

prevailing foreign policy at the time. The anti-Huk campaign occurred in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, which left behind a surplus of armaments and personnel who cut their teeth in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and were adept at integrating with foreign forces. These factors contributed to an American posture spring-loaded for small-scale intervention in the decade of brushfire communist insurgencies and the reconstruction of several allied states under the Marshall Plan. US intervention in El Salvador occurred in the wake of Vietnam, and the revelations and proscriptions of the Church Committee, which limited the intervener's ambitions but was championed by a new activist administration in the White House. Identical conditions will not recur in the United States. Nonetheless, the simple recognition that friendly states will face insurgencies harmful to both their own security and US interests, and that those PN's capabilities may be constructively enhanced will recur.

America's current strategic condition and foreign policy favor the use of small-scale FID to deal with select irregular threats. China's rise coupled with the frustrations of Iraq and Afghanistan has turned the strategic preferences of policymakers toward greater attention to great power conflict in the Pacific and grudging acknowledgement of the spread of sub-state and transnational threats. The new condition is not analogous to the Cold War, but has important similarities to post-World War II and post-Vietnam foreign policy environments. Based on this, it is possible that a well-crafted irregular warfare strategy could lead to a golden-age of small-scale FID, provided its promise and limitations are equally well understood.

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